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THE CURRENT PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES IN GEORGIA
TITLE I SCHOOLS AS REPORTED BY TITLE I DISTRICT-LEVEL SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS

by

MARTHA MASSEY MCBRIDE

(Under the Direction of Michael D. Richardson)

ABSTRACT

The current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators are described in this quantitative study. Data gathered describe strategies, means of communication, barriers, personnel, and staff development impacting parent involvement.

The researcher found that, although districts employ a variety of research-based strategies to engage parents, only half of the surveyed strategies had been used with any degree of frequency. This is possibly attributed to the finding that almost two-thirds of the participants had five or fewer years Title I administration experience and that many districts had not provided teacher compensation or release time for parent workshops. The most successful strategies identified were workshops with a meal, an activity or PTA, childcare, and door prizes/incentives. Another frequently reported strategy was parent resource centers that provided material checkouts. Summer and Saturday workshops were seldom utilized.

School newsletters/fliers, parent teacher conferences, and open houses were the most successfully utilized communication methods. The least used method was home visits.

District administrators identified parent time, parent attitudes, and lack of transportation as the most frequently reported barriers. Yet, half of the respondents had never been provided transportation to lessen the barrier.

The researcher found that almost three-fourths of the districts do not employ any district parent coordinators and slightly less than one-third provided school part-time certified or full-time non-certified parent coordinators. Over half of the districts utilized parent coordinators to coordinate/teach parent involvement activities/workshops, to communicate with parents, and to conduct home visits.

Almost 70% of the district administrators provided parent involvement training for their site administrators and teachers which was usually delivered by district personnel or through state conferences. Although a majority of Title I administrators felt parent involvement training was very important, only approximately 50% of them had received parent training. Most respondents reported that their training had been received through state conferences/workshops, Title I conferences, and Georgia Compensatory Educational Leaders conferences. Parent involvement, a responsibility of Title I administrators, must begin at the district level; however, this may not be possible since many administrators have had no parent involvement training.

INDEX WORDS: Parent involvement, Parental involvement, Parent-school relationship, Parent participation, Title I, Title I parent involvement, Parent involvement advantages, Parent involvement disadvantages, Parent involvement barriers, Parent involvement in child's education, History of parent involvement, Restructuring, Benefits of involving parents, Parent mandates, Home-school relationship, Dissertations parent involvement, Parent involvement surveys, Home-school surveys

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ADMINISTRATORS

by

MARTHA MASSEY MCBRIDE

B.S., Georgia Southern College, 1974

M. Ed., Georgia Southwestern College, 1977

Ed. S., Valdosta State College, 1988

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2005

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SCHOOLS AS REPORTED BY TITLE I DISTRICT-LEVEL SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS

by

MARTHA MASSEY MCBRIDE

Major Professor: Michael Richardson

Committee: Catherine Woody
Cordelia Zinskie
Dorothy Battle

Electronic Version Approved:
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Mrs. Clayton M. Massey and the late Dr. Clayton M. Massey, who instilled in me the love for learning and provided me with a firm foundation upon which to build my life. This dissertation is also dedicated to my mother-in-law, the late Mrs. Howard McBride, for the love and support she provided that enabled me to achieve my academic endeavors.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

Improving America's schools has become one of the nation's top priorities among both lawmakers and educators (Osborne & deOnis, 1997). The *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001* (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2003b), like its predecessor, *Goals 2000 Act of 1994* (USDOE, 1994b), contains numerous provisions encouraging schools to more actively involve parents in their children's education. President George W. Bush's goal is to "leave no child behind," yet this cannot be accomplished without focusing on "leaving no family behind."

The debate over how to reform the American educational system has been a concern for more than a century (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999). Providing a solid education is a task schools cannot accomplish alone. According to Sandell (1998), "The challenges which face America's children cannot be solved by schools alone, and they cannot be solved by families alone" (p. 128). In attempting to resolve this issue, "parent involvement" has created more rhetoric than any other issue related to improving schools (Epstein, 2001). Today, parent involvement is critical to the success of children in their educational endeavors.

Thirty years of research supports the finding that student learning increases with parental participation (Le Tendre, 1997). Numerous studies indicate that parent involvement results in positive outcomes on student achievement (Bloom, 1986; Brown, 1989; Cotton & Wikeland, 1989; Henderson,

1988; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Johnston, 1990; Olmstead & Rubin, 1982; Walberg, 1984; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). In a 1994 review of 66 studies, Henderson and Berla found evidence of better attendance, higher graduation rates, and fewer special education or remedial placements for children whose parents were actively involved in their education. In a later analysis of 51 studies, Henderson and Mapp (2002) reaffirmed that, regardless of their income or background, students who have involved parents earn higher grades and are more likely to be promoted, to pass their classes, and to earn course credits.

The idea of involving parents in their children's education is not new. However, recent federal and state legislation that accompanied the school reform issue has re-emphasized the crucial need for parent involvement in education (About the PTA: Our History, 2001). Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965*, which included a major parent involvement component, was designed to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students by providing a fair and equal opportunity to obtain proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and assessments (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2002).

Title I is probably the most prominent federal program for assisting parents of low-achieving students, even though other federal programs such as Migrant Education, Bilingual Education, Even Start, Special Education, Indian Education, and the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education all have provisions for parent involvement (Moles, 2001). Each Title I program is managed by a Title I

district-level school administrator. Numerous studies have been conducted on parent involvement, but relatively few have specifically analyzed the Title I parent involvement programs. Since there are no statewide studies of Title I parent involvement practices including all Title I district-level school administrators in Georgia, this study added to the body of research and describes the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators.

History of Parent Involvement and Education Initiatives

To understand the impetus toward parent involvement in public schools, it is important to look at how parents have been involved in their children's education over the years, and the education initiatives that have since evolved. As early as 6000 – 5000 B.C., primitive cultures developed in which children learned by modeling their parents in survival activities such as food hunts (Berger, 1987). According to Berger, the modern concept of family did not evolve until the seventeenth century when the family unit developed around the children. It was during this time that the theorists Comenius of Moravia, Locke of England, Rousseau of Switzerland and France, and Pestalozzi of Switzerland offered new ideas about how important the home was in the education of children (Berger). Pestalozzi was even referred to as the Father of Parent Education (Berger; Goldberg, 1997). Froebel, known as the Father of Kindergarten, believed mothers were the first teachers of their children and should enjoy both language and activities together (Goldberg). These theorists brought the humanistic approach to the rearing of children.

According to Berger (1987), the first White House Conference on Care of Dependent Children in 1909 was the beginning of the U. S. federal government's involvement in family life. In 1916, the first parent cooperative was established in which parents worked in preschools to learn from the teachers (Goldberg, 1997). By 1932, there were 25 states offering parent education courses, and the public library system even started the Mother's Room, where literature and sharing activities could be conducted between mothers and preschoolers. During the 1950s, parents were still involved, and the primary focus shifted to the mental health of the child as opposed to the emphasis on strict scheduling and discipline of the 1920s. Goldberg noted that the 1957 launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union caused alarm in the United States concerning children's academic abilities. This concern over the achievement of the student population extended into the 1990s and continues even today.

Minority groups in the 1960s became active in demanding that public schools become more responsive to their children's needs, and "a number of federal laws were passed which recognized the importance of parents in their children's education" (Rioux & Berla, 1993, p. 356). These laws included the *Follow Through Program*; *Bilingual Education Act*; *Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975*; and *Even Start*. The *Economic Opportunity Act of 1964* established the community action program known as *Head Start* (Gestwicki, 2000). According to Mitchell (2000), it was the passage of the *Elementary and Secondary Act* (ESEA) in 1965, under President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, that enhanced the federal government's commitment to providing equal

educational opportunities for disadvantaged students. This commitment was evident as Title I, a program developed to serve disadvantaged students, received up to 80% of all *ESEA* funding. In addition to the mandated parent involvement in these programs, “In the late 1960s, the mission of President Johnson’s Great Society was to bring the advantages of the high-functioning upper middle class to minorities, the handicapped, and the economically disadvantaged” (Goldberg, 1997, p. 8). The needs of poor children were targeted as the war on poverty began, thereby making it important to explore the relationship between families and schools during the next decade.

Life in the 1970s was complicated for families (Goldberg, 1997). Tensions increased, as both educators and parents had to determine how to accommodate parental needs and interests. According to Olsen and Fuller (1998), because the U.S. economy had changed dramatically during the 1970s and because parents from all economic, ethnic, and racial segments were generally not available during the day, schools had to rethink how to involve parents and to what extent (Gestwicki, 2000).

Even during the 1980s, families were plagued by crime and drug use in addition to teenage pregnancy and unwed motherhood (Goldberg, 1997). By 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education had issued its report, *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, informing parents of their responsibility for participating actively in their children's education.

A subsequent series of educational reform initiatives promoted the involvement of parents. According to Gestwicki (2000), the first national

educational goals evolved from the 1990 Education Summit Conference which was convened by President George H. W. Bush. Decker and Decker (2003) also reported that at this conference President Bush and the nation's governors created *America 2000: An Education Strategy*. The national focus of *America 2000* was to increase parent and family involvement in school reform and restructuring. Under President Bill Clinton's administration, an expansion of *America 2000* became *Goals 2000*. The *Goals 2000* legislation also stressed the importance of schools voluntarily involving parents by stating that "by the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (Vaden-Kierman & Westat, Inc., 1996, p. 1; USDOE, 1994a). Sandell (1998) found this goal to be the foundation for achieving the other seven goals, which relate to student achievement in school. The educational initiatives in regard to the history of parent involvement provide a foundation for taking a look at the history of Title I and the impact of parent involvement within the Title I programs.

History of Title I

It is important to take an in-depth look at Title I because it was the largest program authorized in 1965 as part of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* and was reauthorized under the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001*. Furthermore, the impact of Title I is widespread because most of America's school districts, schools, and students are affected by its provisions (Lyons & Gooden, 2001). The U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown vs. Board of*

Education planted the seeds for the Title I program. As a follow-up to this 1954 landmark case, President John Kennedy, in 1961, unsuccessfully attempted to enact a major federal aid program based on the concern that equal educational opportunities were not being afforded to African American children (Lyons & Gooden). It was President Johnson who continued to pursue President Kennedy's civil rights agenda (Lyons & Gooden) by enhancing the federal government's commitment to providing educational opportunity for disadvantaged students with the 1965 passage of the *ESEA* (Mitchell, 2000). The *ESEA* was the first of many federal laws passed which included "provisions for involvement of parents in the planning, monitoring, and evaluating of programs" (Mitchell, p. 356).

Members of Congress anticipated that by waging a war on poverty, the "cycle of poverty" could be eliminated. This would be accomplished by providing additional financial resources for educating the disadvantaged, whereby the less fortunate would move into the middle class (Jennings, 2002). Title I funds continue to be based on the numbers of economically disadvantaged children enrolled. However, the focus has changed, because the original Title I program did not specify the types of services the districts should provide, nor did it specify any student achievement goals, whereas *NCLB* mandates very specific services, particularly in the area of parent involvement. The most notable difference is the high level of both educational and fiscal accountability that underlies *NCLB*, requiring the same expectations for Title I students as for all other students. Lyons and Gooden (2001) noted that over the years, the U.S. Office of Education

has tightened regulations to ensure that Title I funds are supplemental and do not supplant or replace any state or local funding.

Over 35 years old, Title I has been reauthorized every five years (Jennings, 2002), with the most recent Title I reauthorization occurring under President George W. Bush in the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Today, Title I provides services to students in all 50 states. The Fiscal Year 2004 federal Title I budget allocated over 12 billion dollars to ensure that schools leave no children behind in terms of educational progress. As a participating state, Georgia provides Title I services to students in all 180 school districts. According to the 2001-2002 Georgia Public Education Report Card (Georgia Department of Education, 2003), 757 Georgia schools are operating Title I schoolwide projects where all children in the schools may benefit academically through the financial resources and programs implemented under the Title I umbrella of services. The Title I legislation not only allocates financial resources for providing educational services for the disadvantaged student, but also continues to put an emphasis on providing parent involvement programs.

According to Cowan, Manasevit, Edwards, and Sattler (2002), “The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* enacted some of the most sweeping changes to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*” (p. xiii). “The most significant change was that 95 percent of the 1 percent an LEA (Local Educational Agency) reserves for parental involvement must now be distributed to schools” (p. xvii). This change empowers school personnel to design parent involvement programs that will blend the goals of the school with the needs of the

children and families they serve. Having examined the history of both parent involvement and Title I as well as the emphasis on parent involvement in the Title I program, it is important to explore the role of Title I district-level administrators.

Role of Title I Administrators

Each of the 180 local educational agencies or school districts in Georgia has either a full-time or part-time administrator designated to implement the provisions of Title I, including the parent involvement component. This Title I district-level administrator may be a superintendent or other administrator. The Title I administrator must develop a written district parent involvement policy that is created jointly with the parents of participating children as well as school administrators and teachers. Furthermore, the Title I district administrator must provide technical assistance to the district's Title I schools as they plan and implement meaningful parent involvement programs. These programs must include materials and training to help parents learn ways to work with their children, and these programs and communications with the parents must be in a language the parents can understand. Other services that may be provided are literacy services for parents as well as training for staff members on how to form partnerships with parents and ways to coordinate parent programs (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2002).

Title I administrators were selected as participants for this study because federal funds for parent involvement flow through district offices, and Title I

district-level school administrators are responsible for administering these funds. To meet the recent federal mandates that encourage giving parents a more active voice in schools, district-level administrators assigned to implement these mandates on the local level have been seeking appropriate means by which to accomplish this task. The impetus toward restructuring schools to encompass more parent involvement, and the channeling of so many federal dollars into the programs, are both solid reasons for examining the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators.

Statement of the Problem

American schools are often in the forefront of discussion for parents, teachers, business people, and students. While many school conditions are often discussed, the public, along with legislators, is demanding improvement in children's academic achievement. Educators are aware that parent interaction with children outside of school is just as important as, if not more important than, the educational activities that occur within the school day. Parent involvement in schools has been incorporated into federal programs such as *Head Start*, *Title I*, and other Title programs authorized under *No Child Left Behind*.

Many studies have been conducted in past years concerning the ways parents should be involved, as well as the amount of involvement parents should have in their children's education. Numerous studies have also been conducted to determine the perceptions and practices of principals and teachers regarding parent involvement in schools. Yet, the Title I parent involvement practices as

reported by Title I district-level school administrators have been relatively unexplored. For the purpose of this study, a Title I district-level administrator is the individual in the local school district who is assigned the responsibility of managing the system's federal Title I program. Furthermore, the strategies, means of communication, barriers, personnel, and staff development impacting the involvement of parents in their children's education were investigated. No statewide studies of Title I parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by all Title I district-level school administrators were found. This researcher was also unable to locate any state that had conducted a statewide study of Title I parent involvement. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators, in an effort to provide a knowledge base for all parents, educators, and legislators involved in the decision-making process.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was: What are the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators? To determine the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools, the researcher explored the following subquestions:

1. What strategies are utilized for involving parents in their children's education, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?

2. What do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report as techniques or strategies their district personnel use for communicating with parents?
3. What barriers hinder parent involvement initiatives, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?
4. What personnel do Georgia Title I district-level administrators utilize to implement parent involvement programs?
5. What staff development do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report being made available for teachers and administrators in parent involvement?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study may provide insight into the parent involvement practices in Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level administrators in the state of Georgia. The information obtained from this study could prove beneficial to educational administrators, particularly Title I district-level administrators, who must provide services in parent involvement. The study, designed to collect the strategies, means of communication, barriers, personnel, and staff development being utilized for parent participation, may be advantageous to district-level administrators and schools as well as to first-time administrators who are in the beginning stages of developing parent involvement programs. Furthermore, the results of the proposed study may assist administrators looking to increase parent involvement as a means of meeting the accountability standards that are mandated by federal programs under the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. The

information obtained through this research study could provide the information regarding parent involvement that will enable these administrators to make more sound educated decisions.

Educational leaders on state and local school boards; state department personnel, particularly personnel in the Title I division; college and university professors; and state and federal legislators who are in a position to make decisions concerning parent involvement may benefit from the information contained in this study. Knowledge regarding the current parent involvement practices in Title I schools in Georgia may enable these leaders to understand the issues administrators at the local level face when implementing parent involvement mandates. In addition, the information in this study will help these individuals make informed decisions when writing federal or state legislation and state or local board policies. Furthermore, the state educator certification agencies, regardless of whether or not they presently require parent involvement training, may find the information obtained in this study to be useful in their decision-making process.

This study is of particular significance to the researcher, who is employed as the Title I administrator for a Georgia school system. In this role, the researcher is responsible for parent involvement activities for the system's Title I schools and is constantly seeking new ways to increase parent participation. It is important to the researcher that the home/school relationship be an on-going partnership. This study was an attempt to learn ways through which parents are involved in the education of their children.

Procedures

This research study was descriptive in nature. The descriptive method was selected because the study sought to determine the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators.

Since a survey that would be an appropriate instrument to measure the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools could not be located, the researcher developed a survey that encompassed these parent involvement topics: strategies, means of communication, barriers, personnel, and staff development. The survey was reviewed by a panel of five Title I experts in Georgia to establish content validity, and a pilot test was conducted among 10 Georgia Title I district-level administrators. These 10 administrators served school districts that represented different geographic locations across the state as well as a variety of school sizes. The survey instrument, along with a cover letter explaining the study, was mailed to all other administrators in Georgia who were serving as district Title I administrators (N=169).

Once the surveys were returned, the data were analyzed by frequency and percentage of responses. The software package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - Windows version (SPSS - W) (SPSS 8.0, 1997) was utilized in order to answer the overarching question and the subquestions.

Limitations

Since the researcher used a specified population (i.e. Title I district-level administrators of public school systems in the state of Georgia), the following limitations were recognized as possible implications for the results of the study:

1. The study only utilized responses from the Title I district-level administrators in public school systems in Georgia, and the results, therefore, may not be generalizable to Title I district-level administrators in other states.
2. The study utilized only responses from district-level administrators, and the results, therefore, may not be generalizable to school-level administrators.
3. Since the data were collected through a self-reported survey, the accuracy of the data depended on the extent to which the participants responded honestly to all questions.
4. The study utilized only responses relating to Title I parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools.

Delimitations

The study contains the following delimitations:

The surveys for the study were confined to Title I district-level administrators of public schools in Georgia.

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purpose of this research study, the following definitions of key terms apply:

Demographics refer to specific information about a school system or the Title I district-level administrator, such as the system size and years experience in current position, etc.

Family is a unit made up of not less than one child and one caregiver.

LEA is a Local Educational Agency such as a local school system.

Parent is defined as the caregiver of the child, whether it be the natural parent(s), the grandparent(s), an aunt or uncle, a brother or sister, a close friend, or a court-appointed guardian.

Parent involvement and *parent participation* refer to any activity in which parents are involved with their children and their education, whether formal or informal, school-based or a home-based activity.

Public school is a school operated by the state that serves and is supported by federal, state, and local tax dollars.

Restructuring refers to the “activities that change fundamental assumptions, practices and relations, both within the school and between the school and the community, in ways that lead to improved student learning outcomes” (Conley, 1991, p. 49).

Schoolwide refers to the type of Title I program where all federal, state, and local funds may be consolidated to help all children in the school meet state standards. A school must have a minimum of 40% of its students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program in order to operate a Title I schoolwide program (Cowan et al., 2002).

Targeted-assistance refers to the type of Title I program where only specified children who have been identified as low-achieving or at-risk of failing to meet standards may be served in an allowable Title I activity with Title I funds (Cowan et al., 2002).

Title I administrator refers to a full-time or part-time district-level administrator who oversees the implementation of the federal Title I program that is designed to improve the academic achievement of the disadvantaged and includes a parent involvement component.

Summary

It is crucial that parents be active participants in their children's educational journey. Numerous definitions of what constitutes parent involvement exist. For the purpose of this study, parent involvement was any activity in which the parents were involved with their children and the education of those children.

Studies have been conducted in an attempt to determine the perceptions and practices of principals, teachers, and parents regarding parent involvement in schools. This study was significant because Georgia's Title I parent involvement practices as reported by Title I district-level school administrators was an area that had not been researched. Since the mandated federal and state funds for parent involvement are managed on the district level by these individuals, it was important to determine the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators in regard to implementing parent involvement programs in the

Title I schools under their jurisdiction. The results will provide a knowledge base for all parents, educators, and legislators involved in the decision-making process.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

A review of the history of education reveals dramatic changes in beliefs and practices regarding the involvement of family and community in education in the United States (Simon & Epstein, 2001). During colonial times, the school personnel and programs were controlled by the families, churches, and communities. However, in later years, the changes in social and economic conditions separated the schools from the families and communities, resulting in a strong emphasis on the educational leadership of the school personnel (Simon & Epstein). The accountability placed upon schools today through initiatives such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* has necessitated reform in the schools, where "no family is left behind" in an effort to ensure that "no child is left behind."

Reform

Education is a constantly evolving process because life and society undergo continuous change. This naturally provides a foundation for reform of the educational system and the subsequent restructuring efforts that have evolved. Batsche (1992) noted that over time, as the family structure and society have changed and as schools have undergone reform, it has been necessary that schools and parents form a partnership.

"Shifting the blame for children's school problems from the school to the home is not a satisfactory solution. Mutual respect is the answer," stated Scott-Jones (1988, p. 6). Batsche (1992) reported, "The success of the schooling

process in the 21st century may well rely on our ability to link schools and families as effective partners in the education of children” (p. xv). Christenson and Conoley (1992) found that partnerships were integral to improving student learning because schools cannot meet all the needs of children today. They found that a collaborative effort was mandatory because of America’s number of at-risk children, problem situations, and changing demographics.

In 1994, Congress passed the *Improving America’s Schools Act*. This legislation broadened the accountability system that is part of *Chapter 1* (now renamed *Title I*) (Cowan et al., 2002). One important change brought about by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* has been the requirement that school personnel develop parent involvement programs to meet the specific needs of the children and families they serve (Cowan et al.). The reforms in society that have caused the educational system to encompass more parent involvement are the basis for examining the movement toward restructuring.

Restructuring

The changes of communities in both economic and family structures have produced major challenges for educators (Batsche, 1992). One of these major challenges, “restructuring,” was defined by Conley (1991) as “the activities that change fundamental assumptions, practices and relations, both within the school and between the school and the community, in ways that lead to improved student learning outcomes” (p. 49). An example of a restructuring activity would be the forming of a home-school collaboration whose goal would be to increase child and youth competence. In addition, Wildy and Loudon (2000) found that the

school restructuring movement has impacted the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that school leaders are required to have, and has made principals become more accountable to external stakeholders and authorities. Wildy and Loudon also noted that principals now must be more democratic, collaborative, and participative as they share their power with other members of the school community. The impetus toward restructuring schools to encompass more parent involvement is the basis for examining the history of the restructuring of public education in the United States.

History of Restructuring

Restructuring has always been a part of America's educational landscape, as schools have sought to meet the needs of students and society. From 1837 to 1848 Horace Mann wrote 12 annual reports on structuring and restructuring American public education (Ellis & Fouts, 1994). A century later, in 1938, in his report to the annual convention of the National Education Association, William Bagley, professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University, cited several concerns about American public education. One of his concerns indicated that American elementary and secondary students were underachieving as compared to students in foreign countries. Bagley also noted that even though increased funds were being expended on educating America's children, the crime rate still continued to rise (Ellis & Fouts). In 1983, John Goodlad, in his book, *A Place Called School*, noted the failings of the school system, which he suggested could be reformed by having smaller schools, increased parent participation, and curricular offerings that would lead to lifelong

learning (Ellis & Fouts). National interest in education was later heightened by President Clinton's State of the Union message in 1997 that issued a *Call to Action for American Education in the 21st Century* (USDOE, 1994a). All community stakeholders were challenged in the President's Call to Action, which provided the focus needed for changes in education. Yet, Ellis and Fouts concluded that the idea of restructuring schools would not be an issue if parents were more involved in their children's education than they have been in recent decades. In part, Title I was an attempt to meet student and societal needs by restructuring education.

History of Title I

Title I has been the largest and most important federal resource for reforming high-poverty schools for the 35 years of its existence (Borman, 2000). To assist children in attaining high standards, every Title I school district maximizes resources and utilizes effective instructional strategies for improving academic achievement. School systems have accomplished this by providing an accelerated, high-quality curriculum (Le Tendre, 1996). Highly-qualified staff members who have been afforded professional development opportunities have provided the instruction. Furthermore, each Title I school has continued to increase parent involvement.

The early years of Title I were characterized by intergovernmental conflict, poor implementation, and a lack of achievement (Borman, 2000). During the 1970s and 1980s, Title I was marked by the development of specific implementation and accountability standards, modest achievement effects, and

improved implementation, as well as cooperation between federal and local education agencies. Even though new legislation stressed reform and improvement during the late 1980s and 1990s, the stable administration of the Title I program resulted in negligible achievement effects. Today, the Title I program is implementing research-based programs and practices as a means of improving student achievement (Borman).

Title I mandates that all schools and districts utilizing Title I monies employ an extensive array of activities to form collaborative relationships between parents and school staffs to support student learning. The emphasis on increasing the involvement of families in the education of their children by the federal government has been so important that the *Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)* of 1994 required the U. S. Department of Education to conduct a parent involvement study (USDOE, 1997b). The purpose of the study was to identify the most common barriers to parent involvement as well as successful local policies and programs that improved not only parent involvement but also the performance of participating children (USDOE).

Title I Parent Involvement

"Currently, Title I parent involvement legislation is congruent with research on how to bolster student learning through parental participation" (D'Agostino, Hedges, Wong, & Borman, 2001, p. 134). As the importance of influences on academic learning outside the school has escalated, schools have been forced to seek means to become more effective and more productive (Redding, 2000). The goal of the Title I program is to improve academic achievement. Therefore,

Title I initiatives to involve parents have developed as a means of accomplishing this task. “The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built,” stated former United States Department of Education Secretary Richard W. Riley (USDOE, 1997a, p. 2). Providing a solid education is a task schools must accomplish collaboratively. According to P. M. Timpane, former Vice President of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, schools must rethink how parents and communities are involved in education because the schools will fail if a collaborative relationship is not developed with the parents and the community (Decker & Boo, 2001). The National Congress of Parents and Teachers, commonly called the National PTA, is the oldest and the largest voluntary parent/child advocacy organization in the United States. Even though the National PTA has been focusing on parent involvement since 1897 (About the PTA: Our History, 2001), only recently have schools recognized the importance of involving parents in their children’s education.

Federal Initiatives

Support for parent involvement has been so widespread that it has been included in almost every recent policy proposed as a means of improving the academic performance of America’s school children, beginning with Goals 2000 in 1994 (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). More legislative attention has been given to the development of partnerships with families and to the creation of programs designed to overcome various conditions that caused children to be less successful academically in the 1990s than they had been in earlier times (Moles, 2001). Yet, the federal government has a long history of involving

parents in its programs. In addition to Title I, some of the programs mandating a parent involvement component include migrant education, bilingual education, Indian education, special education, Even Start, Parent Information and Resource Centers, and Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (Moles).

Since 1966, migrant education has been a part of Title I, providing the same level of parent consultation as Title I. Moles (2001) noted advocacy and outreach activities have been conducted for both migrant children and their families to help them access other education, health, nutrition, and social services. Another attempt to provide outreach activities came through the Indian education programs. Although these programs were funded in 1965, the parent involvement component was not fully incorporated until the *Indian Education Act of 1972*. Parents of Indian children were to serve on committees to assist the LEA in developing their Indian education programs (Moles). An additional federal program that has mandated high parent participation is the special education program. The 1975 *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* authorization gave parents extensive freedom to be involved in the writing of their children's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and challenged schools to focus not so much on the child as on the family as a unit of service. Another federal initiative authorized in 1988 that integrated early childhood education, adult literacy training, parenting education, and interactive literacy activities between children from birth to seven years of age and their parents was the Even Start Literacy Program (Moles).

Parent initiatives flourished in the 1990s. Parent Information and Resource Centers were established through *The Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994* (Moles, 2001). Now found in every state, the Parent Information and Resource Centers have a three-fold purpose: to increase parents' knowledge of child-rearing activities, to strengthen partnerships between parents and professionals, and to promote the development of assisted children (Moles). In 1994, the U.S. Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education was formed to increase opportunities for family involvement in their children's education at home and at school, and to further children's learning and achievement. According to Moles, over 7000 family, educational, community, business, and religious organizations have formed a collaborative as a means of contributing to children's learning. Parents of special education children were given expanded opportunities to partner with school staffs at both the state and local levels through the 1997 amendments to the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990* (Moles). In addition, bilingual education funds have been utilized for programs that serve children with limited English proficiency (LEP), and for parent outreach and training activities to help parents of LEP students become more actively involved in their children's education (Moles).

State Title I Initiatives

In a 1996 national Title I survey regarding the implementation of the 1994 *Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)*, Billig (1997) found parent involvement implementation to be a major challenge. Similarly, Billig's second national survey in 1997 also found that the family and community involvement portions of the

Title I law were the least likely to be implemented. The 1997 survey also showed few differences in implementation among various regions of the country (Billig, 1998). Although no major differences were reported between regions, several states did report large differences. Changes since the initial 1996 Title I survey of parent involvement had been made in the Midwest, Kentucky, Minnesota, Michigan, and Indiana. Billig (1998) found that more systems were utilizing Title I funds to hire local people as parent coordinators. Furthermore, 20% of those surveyed had established Family Resource Centers and found them to be useful in fostering partnerships with parents. Many of the parent involvement strategies reported were designed to assist parents in helping their children acquire literacy or math skills as well as encourage communication between individuals in the home and the school. According to Billig, it was recommended by several respondents that a certain portion of Title I funds be mandated for expenditure on parent involvement or staff development. Billig concluded with a recommendation that parent coordinators and Family Resource Centers be examined as possible options for more meaningful involvement by parents.

In a study of parent involvement in Alabama's schools, Freeman (2001) found non-Title I schools had more limited plans and programs for parents than did Title I schools. Furthermore, Title I schools in Alabama offered training for parents and teachers in how to work together, and they established more parent resource areas than did non-Title I schools. Richardson (1996) conducted a study among Chapter 1 (now Title I) parents in Ware County, Georgia and reported that the majority of parents recognized the importance of their children's

success in school, and had a desire to help their children academically. However, only 48% to 60% of responding parents had actually participated in a specific organized parent involvement activity. Over three-fourths of responding parents had helped with homework, worked with their children, or spent time reading together. Nearly 70% of the parents served as volunteers, attending school meetings such as PTA, serving as committee members, or assisting at a special school event. Research results such as these documented by Richardson support the belief that parents do have a desire to be involved in their children's education.

Because researchers have continued to consistently prove that the benefits of increasing parent involvement at the federal and state levels are substantial, schools have begun implementing strategies to increase parent involvement by forming parent partnerships (Epstein, 1995; Rioux & Berla, 1993). Successful school programs do not rely on one or two activities. Instead, they incorporate multiple components (D'Agostino et al., 2001). Schools today incorporate a variety of strategies such as parent resource centers, parent coordinators, communication methods, transportation, childcare, incentives, and parent workshops.

Importance of Parent Involvement

The goal of the Title I program is to improve academic achievement. Therefore, Title I initiatives to involve parents have developed as a means of accomplishing this task. The finding that an increase in student achievement occurs in children whose parents participate, is based on 30 years of research

(Le Tendre, 1997). Increasing parent involvement in children's education is one of the most popular education initiatives. It is a concept that is endorsed by parents, teachers, and policymakers (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett with Aulicino & McHugh, 1999). The nationwide Public Agenda study that included over 1220 parents and 1000 teachers reported that 70% of parents interviewed believed parents need to get more involved in their children's education. Similarly, 66% of the teachers surveyed agreed with the parents that current parent involvement efforts were inadequate (Farcas et al.).

History of Title I Parent Involvement

Today, signaling a clear and growing commitment to the role of families, the *No Child Left Behind Act* contains specific provisions for engaging families that both schools and school districts must observe. A parent involvement policy, the foundation upon which parent initiatives are based, is written by district and school personnel in conjunction with parents, and is one requirement for schools receiving Title I funds. Addressing how the school will engage families, the parent involvement policy must explain how the school staff will attempt to overcome barriers to parent involvement as well as how it will coordinate their involvement into other programs. Furthermore, this policy must be communicated to parents in a language they can understand (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The educational initiatives, based upon the importance of involving parents, provide a foundation for examining the history of Title I parent involvement programs. Serving more than 10 million students with a 2003 appropriation of 11.25 billion dollars (USDOE, 2003a), Title I has been the most

important federal resource for reforming high-poverty schools for over 35 years (Borman, 2000; Moles, 2001). In 2002, out of 46,969 Title I eligible schools in the United States, there were 23,563 Title I schoolwide programs serving 25.4% of the student population (USDOE, 2002). The state of Georgia had 1,020 eligible Title I schools in 2002 and served 726 schools in schoolwide programs, or 30.3% of the enrolled students.

Parent participation by volunteering in the classroom was one of the suggested components of Title I when it was established in 1965 (D'Agostino et al., 2001), even though the law did not establish any specific parent involvement regulations (D'Agostino et al.; Moles, 2001). Three years later (1968), Title I regulations required that LEAs involve parents in program planning, operation, and evaluation. By 1972, Title I districts were required to have Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), and two years later (1974), Congress issued a mandate requiring schools servicing 40 or more Title I students to develop school PACs. Under the 1978 amendments, parents had to be involved in establishing programs by making recommendations regarding the monitoring of instruction and students. They were also given the opportunity to assist their children in achieving academic goals. Three years later (1981), Title I became known as Chapter 1 and LEAs were simply required to consult with parents. Parent involvement efforts were later enhanced again by the 1983 Technical Amendments, which required annual meetings by LEAs to explain the Title I program and which allowed LEAs to utilize funds to provide activities requested by parents (D'Agostino et al.).

It was not until 1988 that the Stafford-Hawkins Amendments to Chapter 1 permitted involving parents in the planning and implementation of parent programs, providing information in parents' native languages, and holding parent-teacher conferences (D'Agostino et al., 2001). In initial Title I programs, requirements focused more on school-related parent involvement through governance and volunteering. During the 1990s, however, schools were given more flexibility in tailoring parent programs matched to their parents' needs, and the emphasis moved to involving parents both at home and at school (D'Agostino et al.).

Chapter 1 was reauthorized as Title I in 1994 and retained all of the 1988 amendments. The requirement whereby schools would develop school-parent compacts with parents, teachers, and students accepting responsibility for ways each could help children achieve state standards was added. In addition, a provision was implemented that mandated schools spend no less than one percent of their Title I monies on parent programs (D'Agostino et al., 2001). Although the amended 1994 Title I required the involvement of parents by districts and schools and mandated specified Title I grant funds to such activities, the federal level did not get involved in how these provisions were implemented. This was because the responsibility to engage parents was placed at the local level (Piche, McClure, & Schmelz, 1999).

The federal role in education was challenged during 1995 and 1996 after the Republicans took control of both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate for the first time in 40 years. However, with the support of President

Clinton and business leaders in late 1996, not only were attempts halted that would have eliminated or cut the federal role in education, but a substantial increase in funding for Title I and other education programs resulted (Jennings, 2002).

Advantages of Parent Involvement

The level of accountability placed upon schools today demands improvements in student achievement. Parent involvement is one means by which schools can achieve this goal. Teachers in Lawson's 2003 study affirmed that the involvement of Title I parents, both at school and at home, is extremely beneficial to the educational success of their children. Although it is impossible to attribute achievement gains or student outcomes solely to a school's or a district's parent involvement program, schools that have been successful in raising student achievement reported strong levels of parent involvement (USDOE, 2001).

After reviewing 35 years of research, Marzano (2003) found that schools can enhance student achievement by increasing parent and community involvement. Specifically, in a study of urban school districts that was conducted between 1994 and 1998, parent involvement was found to be a most successful strategy for boosting the achievement of Title I students (Council of the Great City Schools, 1999). Sanders and Simon reported similar results in a 1999 study of National Network of Partnership schools. This study found that a majority of the participating schools improved student achievement by utilizing school, family, and community partnerships (Sanders & Simon, 1999). Numerous

researchers have also linked parent involvement efforts to improved student achievement (Bloom, 1986; Brown, 1989; Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Daniels, 1996; Epstein, 1992; Epstein, 1995; Henderson, 1988; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Johnson, 1994; Johnston, 1990; Olmstead & Rubin, 1982; USDOE, 1997b; USDOE, 2001; Walberg, 1984; Zellman & Waterman, 1998).

Several studies of various parent involvement strategies have focused specifically on improvements in reading, mathematics, or language arts scores. Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) conducted an investigation of the influence of the home and school on the development of literacy. They found a strong relationship between parent contacts initiated by the teacher and improvements in student reading comprehension. A similar study, in an elementary school where K-3 children were at-risk but were exceeding expectations in reading achievement, reflected strong links to parents through frequent parent-teacher communication and at-home reading programs (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999). Higher reading test scores were posted by children of more involved parents, according to another study that utilized controls for each child's IQ, socio-economic status, and ethnicity (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Still another study found student reading and math test scores improved through increased communication between parent involvement personnel and parents (Hiatt-Michael, 2001).

In a study involving middle school students participating in the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) project, parents were provided learning

materials for use at home and utilized school-parent learning compacts. In this study, Epstein, Simon, and Salinas (1997) noted that Title I students' reading achievements were indirectly influenced by utilizing interactive homework assignments and requiring that students complete or discuss their work with a family member. Epstein et al. also found that students who participated in the language arts TIPS program improved on writing samples, and those who completed the most TIPS assignments received higher grades in language arts on their report cards.

Although many researchers reported enhanced student achievement as a result of parent involvement, some researchers' findings deviated from this conclusion. A study conducted by D'Agostino et al. (2001) among Title I students found neither parents' school-based activities nor Title I schools' initiatives to involve parents had any relationship to student achievement.

Studies relating to the benefits of involving parents have also been conducted at all grade levels. In a 2002 review of 51 research studies covering childhood through high school and all regions of the country, Henderson and Mapp (2002) reaffirmed that, regardless of income or background, active family involvement resulted in numerous benefits for students. Students with involved parents scored higher on standardized tests (Henderson & Berla, 1994). These students improved their grades (Anderson, 1995), earned higher grade point averages (Fehrmann, Keith, & Riemers, 1987; Henderson & Berla; Simon, 2001), and enrolled in more challenging academic programs. These students also had better attendance records (Hiatt-Michael, 2001; McNeal, 1999; Sanders & Simon,

1999), passed more of their classes, and, therefore, earned more credits (Henderson & Berla; Simon; USDOE, 1997b). Furthermore, students with involved parents exhibited improved behavior (Anderson, 1995; Sanders & Simon) and more positive attitudes (Anderson; Simon, 2001; Henderson & Berla) both at home and at school, as well as better social skills and adaptation to school.

All families, regardless of cultural backgrounds, education, and income levels, positively influence their children's learning. In an earlier review of 66 studies, Henderson and Berla (1994) found that students with involved parents completed more homework assignments and were less frequently placed in special education programs. Another benefit was that children of parents who were involved in their education were less likely to drop out of school (Henderson & Berla; McNeal, 1999; Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulos, Ritter, & Dornbusch, 1990). In addition, these children furthered their education by attending a postsecondary school more often than those children who had less parent involvement (Henderson & Berla). Parental involvement in their children's education was positively correlated to high school students who were more motivated to seek challenging tasks, who persisted through academic challenges, and who experienced satisfaction in their school work (Gonzalez, 2002).

Parents actively involved in the Minneapolis Public Middle Schools noted other positive outcomes. These included increased numbers of parents participating in school decision-making, in school-to-home communication, and in parents serving as tutors, as well as more community awareness and support for

the schools (Bernick & Rutherford, 1995). In addition, benefits reported by parents who participated in Family Math and Reading programs included improved relationships with their children and improved skills in how to participate in school conferences (Anderson, 1995).

Positive outcomes for children also resulted when the parents became more actively involved. According to Anderson (1995), some positive outcomes included children acquiring a better understanding of difficult concepts, increasing their level of confidence, and becoming more willing to attempt difficult assignments. Other positive outcomes found among the children included increased self-esteem as well as decreased television viewing time (Anderson).

Another advantage noted by parents and teachers were benefits in parents volunteering. They believed their efforts could be more successful when both groups understood the approach that worked best for children. Parent involvement is beneficial and has been a major factor in motivating parents to volunteer more often, resulting in parents acquiring an understanding of the goals teachers are attempting to accomplish in the classroom (Anderson, 1995; Bernick & Rutherford, 1995; Daniels, 1996). Echoing this belief, Baker (1997) reported teachers saw benefits in parents volunteering in the classroom because it allowed the parents to be in the school building on a more frequent basis. This resulted in increased contact between teachers and parents that helped to develop trust and rapport between the two groups. As a result of the school-parent relationship, parents felt more connected to the schools and therefore felt more comfortable being inside the school (Anderson; Billig & Rutherford, 1995).

Families benefited because as the parents became more confident about the school, they often times became more confident about themselves as parents. This confidence often led them to further their own education by enrolling in continuing education classes (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Unlike most studies, a New York City study noted that parent involvement efforts were impacted as a result of a decrease in children being interested in having their parents at school (Billig & Rutherford).

In addition to the beneficial effects that volunteering had on families, teachers also reported several benefits of having parents more involved with their children's education in the home. Teachers found it beneficial to have parents assist their children at home since they saw school and home learning as being a single continuum of education. The children were more motivated in learning at school if the parents had assisted with homework, read to them, taken them to the library, and made learning an everyday activity. Teachers reported that parents being involved in such activities with their children made their jobs easier because the children were better prepared and had a firmer foundation on which to build (Baker, 1997).

In addition to the student benefits reported by teachers, involving parents was also beneficial to the teachers. Teacher morale was higher in schools that experienced high levels of parent involvement. These teachers were rated higher by parents, and the schools generally had better reputations in the community (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

The levels of involvement of parents were often affected by the family structure. According to the 1996 National Household Education Survey, when fathers were actively involved in their children's schools, there was a greater likelihood of students earning mostly As, regardless of the type of family unit (Nord & West, 2001). Students living with both of their biological parents were less likely to repeat a grade when the father was involved. Regardless of the family unit, children were most likely to earn As when their biological mothers were involved in their school experiences. Similarly, students in grades 6-12 were less likely to be suspended or expelled when either their biological or stepmother was actively involved (Nord & West).

In regard to the relationship between various dimensions of parents' involvement with their adolescents and educational expectations at later adolescence, Trusty (1998) analyzed national data and found that socioeconomic status (SES) was strongly related to educational expectations. For lower SES families, parent involvement was a high predictor of educational expectations, whereas the parents' attendance at school-related activities was a stronger predictor of educational expectations for children in moderate and high levels of SES (Trusty). Allowing a control for socioeconomic status, Marcon (1999) reported that preschoolers' early development and mastery of basic skills was positively affected by parents being more actively involved. Furthermore, the children's academic and developmental progress increased with even minimal amounts of parent involvement. Recognizing the benefits of involving parents, it

was also important to investigate the concerns with parent involvement and parent involvement studies.

Concerns with Parent Involvement and Parent Involvement Studies

Although recent legislation such as *NCLB* has made parent involvement a priority, and school districts are seeking ways to form partnerships with parents, some researchers have concluded that parent involvement by itself does not make a difference on student achievement. Baker and Soden (1997) found, in a review of over 200 articles on parent involvement, that many researchers had not isolated related variables from the effects of parent involvement; therefore, even though the results proved to have positive impacts on the children, the gains could not positively be attributed to the importance of parent involvement only. Concurring, Smock and McCormick (1995) found "little empirical data to substantiate or refute this strong emphasis" (p. 408) on involving parents in their children's education. Baker and Soden also recommended that further research be conducted that separated the type and level of parent involvement from other interventions.

In a review of 41 studies, Cotton and Wikelund (1989) concluded that, although parents both desire and need training in how to be involved, extensive training did not result in higher student achievement, and a small amount was more beneficial than extensive training. Concurring, Marcon (1999) found a child's academic and developmental progress could be affected by only a minimal amount of parent involvement.

In regard to parent communication, Catsambis (1998) found contacts high school parents had with school personnel had a strong negative effect on the number of course credits earned. Frequent contacts also had a negative effect on student enrollment in an academic curriculum. Furthermore, Catsambis noted the effects of parent involvement are weaker for high school seniors than for students in earlier grades, and, where parents are involved by supervising their high school students' coursework and behavior, negative effects are reported on the students' academic achievement.

Issues were also reported relating to how the evaluations of the parent programs were conducted. In an analysis of 41 parent involvement program evaluations, Maltingly, Prislín, McKenzie, Rodriguez, and Kayzar (2002) determined the evaluation designs and data collection techniques lacked rigor and, therefore, could not provide valid evidence of the effectiveness of the parent involvement programs analyzed. Frequently, Maltingly et al. found control groups were not utilized in the studies, and crucial information was not reported. Although the evaluation methods were not sufficient, Maltingly et al. still found parent involvement programs to be an effective method of engaging parents in their children's education.

M. Thompson (personal communication, June 14, 2005), founder of the Learning-Focused schools model, found that although raising achievement in the 90/90/90 schools (90% eligible for free/reduced lunch, 90% minority, and 90% on grade level on state assessments) was possible with limited parent involvement, it was just harder to accomplish. In looking at what could be controlled, the

90/90/90 schools chose to place emphasis on what happened to the children while they were at school rather than while the children were at home.

Recognizing the concerns with parent involvement and parent involvement studies that have been identified, it is also important to examine the obstacles to parent involvement.

Barriers to Parent Involvement Initiatives

Much research has been conducted on barriers to parent involvement initiatives. Included were time, childcare, transportation, children issues, language barriers, family issues, and work schedules. Additional barriers to involving parents included socioeconomic issues, parent and teacher issues, teacher attitudes, and communication. In Table 1, information is presented concerning major studies that have been conducted in the area of barriers to parent involvement.

In a synthesis of 64 studies, nearly half of the studies identified barriers to involvement of minority and low-income families in their children's schools (Boethel, 2003). These barriers included contextual factors such as time constraints (Baker, 1997; Freeman, 2001; Lee, 1994; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; McCall, 1998; Rutherford & Bernick, 1995; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001; USDOE, 1997b; USDOE, 1999; USDOE, 2001; Winnail et al., 2000). Obligations to other outside activities (McCall) such as church (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel) also hindered parents from being actively involved. Additional factors included childcare needs (Pena, 2000; Ramirez, 2001; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel; USDOE, 1997b) as well as transportation problems (Baker, 1997; Bernick

Table 1

Studies Relative to Parent Involvement Barriers

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Freeman (2001)	Determine extent of parent involvement in Alabama's public schools Determine specific parent involvement activities Determine barriers to parent involvement	796 Alabama public school principals	Descriptive/ Quantitative: Survey Quantitative measurement techniques: frequencies percentages t tests Analysis of variance	Most serious barrier: parent time Other barriers: Limited interest & Skills of parents
Ramirez (2001)	Investigate parent involvement in U. S. high schools	4 high schools in 2 states 50 teachers 25 parents 8 administrators	Qualitative: Sampling Interviews Observation Document review Analysis: Constant comparative model	Barriers identified: Social class & socio-economic differences Work schedules Day-care Transportation Negative teacher attitudes
Baker (1997)	Investigate type, frequency, and reason for parent involvement as well as the barriers	87 teachers 84% from elementary schools diverse in size and geography	Qualitative: Focus groups Content analysis classified by topic	Barriers identified: Transportation Parent work schedules Family mobility Limited parent education

& Rutherford, 1995; Pena, 2000; Ramirez; USDOE, 1997b). Unlike many studies, Freeman (2001) reported transportation was not a serious barrier to parent involvement in Alabama, although the state is predominantly rural. Similarly, fewer than 10% of responding parents in Ware County, Georgia mentioned transportation as a barrier to visiting the parent resource bus or attending workshops (Richardson, 1996).

Children themselves often served as a barrier to their parents' involvement. The older the child, the less he/she wanted his/her parents physically in the school building, and some children were even distracted by having their parents volunteer inside their classrooms (Baker, 1997). Similarly, Farkas et al. (1999), in analyzing the Public Agenda 1998 report, concluded that an obstacle for high school parents was the embarrassment of older children toward parent involvement. In addition, high school students did not want their parents keeping tabs on their school activities (Simon, 2001).

Regardless of the school level, language barriers where the parents and staff members spoke different languages served as a hindrance to parent involvement efforts (Aronson, 1996; Boethel, 2003; Freeman, 2001; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001; USDOE, 2001). Though most Title I principals noted it as an insignificant barrier, those least likely to involve themselves by participating in school activities were the parents who did not speak English at home (Pena, 2000; USDOE, 1997b).

In addition to language barriers, "barriers may reside in the lives of families and also in programs themselves and the ways they communicate with

families" (Moles, 2001, p. 37). One such barrier encountered by schools today is the issue of other family members raising children (Rutherford & Bernick, 1995; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Therefore, there has been a need to engage grandparents in school parent involvement activities. Yet, the age and ill health of some grandparents created a barrier because it hindered their mobility, thereby placing a limitation on the number of trips they were capable of making outside the home (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel).

Parents reported a number of family issues that serve as barriers to their involvement. Parents were often reluctant to participate due to the belief that they might be confronted by educators who taught them in earlier years at a time when they were not successful in school (Aronson, 1996; Baker, 1997; O'Connor, 2001; Redding, 2000). The parents' education level was a better indicator of their involvement in schools than was the household income level. Parents with little education participated less in school activities (USDOE, 1997b) and, in some cases, this was also a direct result of the negative experiences the parents had as students (Baker, 1995; USDOE).

Although they desired to be more involved and to learn how to better help their children, parents were faced with barriers that limited their visits to the parent resource bus and to attending workshops in Ware County, Georgia. This limitation existed because the day of the week or the time of the day was not convenient (Richardson, 1996). Several barriers identified by Leitch and Tangri (1988), as reported by parents, included large families, a lack of activities that sparked enough interest to motivate the parents to become involved (Freeman,

2001), and apathy of experienced teachers and their unresponsiveness to parents. Studies conducted in Community School District 3 in New York City (Billig & Rutherford, 1995) and the Fort Worth Independent School District (Bernick, Swenson, & Rutherford, 1995) also found an increase in the number of parents returning to the workforce once their children had entered middle school. A family characteristic reported as an obstacle included the large number of women who worked outside the home as well as the loss of a parent through either death or divorce, thereby limiting involvement (Rutherford & Bernick, 1995).

One factor named as a significant barrier was the socioeconomic difference. Parents blamed their limited participation in their children's education on socioeconomic differences that existed between themselves and teachers (Aronson, 1996; Dunlap & Alva, 1999; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; USDOE, 2001). According to Ramirez (2001), parents with lower socioeconomic levels might have been unable to participate due to family circumstances. Baker (1997) identified frequent moves by families that resulted in returned school correspondence, further distancing parents. Another socioeconomic difference identified by Ramirez was the belief that parents who could be released from job responsibilities would have more opportunities to be able to participate more actively in schools.

Another obstacle to middle school parent involvement efforts in the Minneapolis Public Middle Schools was a 30% mobility rate. This hindered parents and teachers from developing meaningful relationships (Bernick &

Rutherford, 1995). A related barrier for migrant children was the short period of time the parents stayed in the school or district, thereby keeping them from being more involved in school planning and committees or from forming relationships with school staffs (Moles, 2001). Furthermore, disconnected phones or families having no phone accessibility were challenges to teachers being able to communicate with parents in the evening. One study in the Minneapolis Public Middle Schools reported limited communication occurring since only 30% of families targeted had home telephones (Bernick & Rutherford).

Parents' lack of knowledge about how schools operate may have resulted in parents feeling alienated from the school (Boethel, 2003; Dunlap & Alva, 1999; Johnson, 1994). The differences between parents' and teachers' ethnicity may have left parents feeling inadequate or unwelcome. Therefore, parents perceived that the school was not sensitive to their feelings, and they withdrew from the school. This led to the assumption by school personnel that parents were simply not interested in being involved with their children's school. The gap was widened because school personnel came from another culture or another part of town and did not acknowledge being a part of the surrounding community (Dunlap & Alva; O'Connor, 2001). Bernick and Rutherford (1995) extended prior research by citing teachers not living in the school neighborhood and not being active participants in community events as the cause of their inaccurate perceptions of students' families and the communities around the schools.

Parent concerns were not the only barriers to parent involvement initiatives. Teachers, in addition to reporting barriers, faced impediments that

created challenges. In the Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I, limited time for staff members to devote to involving parents was reported by principals as one barrier to strengthening parent involvement initiatives (USDOE, 1999). O'Connor (2001) cited a lack of time for teachers to devote to involving parents, as well. Yet, Freeman (2001) did not find teachers' lack of time to be a serious barrier to parent involvement in Alabama.

The attitudes of teachers were also to blame. Teachers often had a feeling of ill-will toward involving parents because teachers felt that they have had to assume more duties that should be the parents' obligations (O'Connor, 2001). Teachers also perceived that involving parents would require additional work responsibilities (Pena, 2000). Teachers were scared of the idea of having parents actively involved in schools (Daniels, 1996). Therefore, teachers' negative attitudes were reported as a barrier by parents who actually had a desire to attend school activities (Ramirez, 2001). Some parents did not feel welcome in the schools (Ramirez). Others recognized that teachers had feelings of resentment and were threatened by the presence of involved parents (Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Pena, 2000).

Additional barriers cited by teachers included parents' unrealistic expectations of the role of the school and parents not having the academic ability necessary to be able to assist their children with school work (Aronson, 1996; Baker, 1997; Freeman, 2001; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001; USDOE, 1999). Work schedules of parents created additional family issues impacting their involvement at their children's schools (Baker; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; McCall,

1998; Pena, 2000; Ramirez, 2001; Redding, 2000; Richardson, 1996; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel). Teachers also perceived this to mean that parents did not place enough importance on school, which was not always the situation (Freeman).

Communication between schools and families was also limited by the beliefs some school officials held. Parents were often perceived by school officials to be incapable of participating due to their laziness, incompetence, or preoccupation with other issues (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Unlike most studies, Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel found that low-income minority parents voiced more frustration about their interactions with school officials, as opposed to feeling intimidated by school officials. An additional communication barrier limiting participation occurred when school staff members communicated by telephone only to notify parents about serious problems rather than establishing on-going friendly dialogue. Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel also noted that communicating in such a pattern coincided with the idea that school personnel possessed certain knowledge and expertise parents did not possess.

Findings from Lawson's 2003 study were consistent with the previous research. The Title I parents in this study noted poor communication as being the major barrier to their children's future health and well-being. Communication was also cited as a challenge to middle school parents being involved (Rutherford & Bernick, 1995). Parents may have attributed this poor communication partially to the notion that school staffs viewed themselves as experts and, therefore, created a barrier by ignoring and/or excluding the opinions of parents (O'Connor, 2001). These parents expressed a concern that school staffs inaccurately

assumed apathy on the parents' behalf based on this idea of expertise and the lower educational level of parents. In addition, parents expressed concern that children associated parent involvement as an indication of negative student behavior and, therefore, failed to deliver school flyers and announcements. Parents also reported seldom receiving notices sent home by the school (Winnail et al., 2000). As a result, when parents did not participate because they were unaware of the school offerings, teachers may have attributed the decreased participation to a lack of caring. On the other hand, teachers attributed parental intimidation to the teachers' educational attainment and class standing as well as the parents' educational attainment (USDOE, 2001).

Teachers in O'Connor's 2001 study also voiced a number of concerns. These educators doubted the parents' ability to participate in a meaningful way in the classroom teaching, and they even expressed fear over the possibility of sharing classrooms with other teachers who might provide more services to parents. Finally, classroom distractions that might occur as a result of having parents present were noted as a potential barrier. Additional factors impeding parent involvement included school staffs not having high expectations for participation by all parents, particularly single parents and low-income parents (Redding, 2000).

Parents held similar beliefs. Ramirez (2001) reported the beliefs parents and teachers had toward one another resulted in both parties feeling fear and insecurity toward the other. In the same vein, differences in the parents' backgrounds (USDOE, 2001), beliefs, and values were seen as barriers to parent

involvement efforts by over half of responding principals in Alabama (Freeman, 2001).

Although many barriers occurred naturally as a result of family or staff issues, other challenges existed due to organizational concerns. Several researchers reported limited efforts to involve middle school parents (Farkas et al., 1999; Winnail et al., 2000). Both middle and high school partnerships were limited by school size and organizational structure (Lee, 1994; Ramirez, 1999; Rutherford & Bernick, 1995; Simon, 2001; Tatar, 1998) as well as teacher and parent attitudes (Epstein & Conners, 1995). Parents and teachers believed that since the students were older, they no longer needed as much adult assistance (Epstein & Conners).

Another barrier outside the control of either schools or families was the number of parent involvement provisions by the federal government and funding. The overlap caused by legislative mandates in a number of federal programs was also seen as a challenge (USDOE, 1999). One of the recommendations of the *1999 Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I* was to consolidate all elementary and secondary parent involvement requirements into one unified parent provision. Including Title I, there were 11 federal programs that mandated parent components (USDOE, 1999). Procurement of funds depended upon the current financial situation of the individual school, district, or state. A variety of funding sources and approaches have been utilized over the years to develop and maintain school and family partnerships. Challenges to parent, family, and community involvement in the Minneapolis Public Middle Schools included a lack

of funds provided by the state for parent and family partnerships (Bernick & Rutherford, 1995). The procurement of funds was a concern of schools committed to developing partnerships with families. The amount of funding available for partnership activities, depending on the source, varied (Sanders, 1999). According to data analyzed from over 100 elementary, middle, and high National Network of Partnership Schools during the 1996-1997 school year, school budgets ranged from less than \$100 to \$70,000, with the average school budget being \$4,065. Out of the 15 sources identified, the most common partnership funding sources were Goals 2000 funds, drug prevention monies, school accounts, and PTA contributions (Sanders).

When Johnson's (1993) first parent center study of 28 schools was conducted in 1991, the funding of the centers was still basically an unknown factor. This was because the parent centers were newly created in 26 of the schools and there was no history. Schools that reported were often unable to distinguish between which funds had been specifically designated for parent centers and those obtained from school funds. In a 1996 Title I study, 30 of 36 states reported funding parent involvement activities solely through Title I funds. Nineteen of the 36 states supplemented Title I funds by utilizing their own general education funds to support family involvement. In addition, 44% of the Title I principals reported their district had also provided special funding for parent involvement (USDOE, 1997b). Almost one-fourth of district Title I administrators reported using Title I funds extensively to support parent, community, and school partnerships. Even Start, the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act, and Goals 2000 federal programs were the most frequently reported means of funding parent involvement programs. A challenge to involving parents at the Natchez, Mississippi Chapter 1 Parent Center was the limitation that only Chapter 1 families could be served since Chapter 1 was the only source of funding (Anderson & Seppanen, 1995). In contrast, schools that operate schoolwide Title I programs would be able to serve all children in the school through the parent center.

Role of Title I Administrator

Parent involvement efforts require the collaborative support of administrators at the school, district, and state levels. Middle school educators in Kentucky reported it was the support of both school administrators and district administrators that made the Louisville parent, family, and community partnership as strong as it was (Rutherford & Bernick, 1995). Yet, a study in the Minneapolis Public Middle Schools reported limited technical assistance was provided by the state to local school districts (Bernick & Rutherford, 1995). Unlike most studies, Chavkin (1995) reported that middle school partnerships were hampered by the lack of guidance and leadership from the district and state in how to establish meaningful home, school, and community relations.

State and district administrators have performed a variety of parent involvement tasks, depending upon the identified needs. The staff members in county offices of education in California performed duties that generally were the responsibility of school district staffs in other states. An example is the San Diego County Office of Education, which serves as an information clearinghouse,

source of direct services to parents, and source of staff development and planning assistance services to districts and schools (Chrispeels, 1991). A key to the Natchez, Mississippi parent center's success was the role the district Chapter 1 Coordinator played in shaping the focus and activities of the center. It was the district administrator's foresight to shift the center's focus from an informal support of providing a clothes closet to an instructional focus where parents were provided resources and activities to use at home to support the child's regular classroom program (Anderson & Seppanen, 1995).

Epstein (2002b) recommended a number of state and district leadership activities. These included writing a parent involvement policy outlining the state or district expectations that included the support the schools would receive through training, funding, encouragement, and recognition of efforts. In addition to assigning a director of home-school-community partnerships at the state level and in large districts, Epstein recommended that state or district administrators develop and communicate the state or district's annual plans. These plans should include specific parent involvement activities that would be conducted. Another recommendation by Epstein was for state and district administrators to not only identify staff and program funds including salaries, staff development, conferences, and evaluations, but also to provide on-going staff development on partnerships and to include annual evaluations of professional and paraprofessional staff for their work with partnerships. Epstein noted it was the responsibility of states and districts to identify aspiring leaders and to invest in preparing them to fulfill school, family, and community partnership roles. Epstein

recommended that state and district administrators serve as the link between local businesses and legislators to solicit business support for parents desiring to be involved in their children's education during work hours. Epstein further recommended that businesses receive recognition for such support. Additional services provided by state and district administrators recommended by Epstein included forming parent involvement advisory committees and reinforcing the importance of preparation and relevant experience in parent involvement when making personnel decisions (Epstein).

At the state and district levels, Title I administrators have had the responsibility of ensuring that parents participated in developing state, district, and school parent involvement policies. Another role of Title I administrators has been that of monitoring the district implementation of Title I policies and services as well as providing schools with the most up-to-date information about family involvement priorities (USDOE, 1997b).

School district Title I administrators managed the funding that flowed from the federal and state governments. Title I district-level administrators have provided technical assistance and funds for professional development that enabled schools to initiate and sustain home-school partnerships. In a study of Title I principals, over half reported their school districts had provided technical assistance for their parent involvement efforts, as well as staffing for parent programs. Borman (2000) reported that both state and district Title I staffs must move from being fiscal and procedural monitors to facilitators of best practices for both academic issues and parent involvement initiatives. Today, parent

involvement initiatives would be considered the best practice for schools and school systems to utilize.

Several other recommendations were made regarding the role of school district Title I administrators. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) recommended district personnel be responsible for working with school personnel to develop their parent involvement mission statement. Another recommendation was that district-level administrators and principals should be responsible for disseminating research and promising parent involvement practices (Curry, Washington, & Zyskowski, 2000; Epstein, 2002b). The San Diego City Schools established a department specifically to oversee the parent involvement policy and to assist the schools in building staff capacities (Chrispeels, 1991). San Diego County district personnel sponsored workshops to introduce school administrators to a newly created parent involvement handbook and to other resource materials available from the district. To meet the needs of their states, districts, schools, and families, Epstein also recommended that state and district administrators develop materials to involve parents. These materials should include handbooks, brochures, and newsletters as well as materials for involving fathers and hard-to-reach family members. Materials should be provided in the parents' native language. Follow-up and support services were another obligation of San Diego district personnel (Chrispeels). A final national Title I study reported that it was the responsibility of the school district to issue and disseminate school report cards or profiles to parents, school staffs, and the community (USDOE, 1999).

Over the years the federal government has required annual Title I evaluations. These Title I evaluations have changed and utilized different standards such as fall-to-spring gains and yearly gains versus sustained effects (McDill & Natriello, 2001). In the 1999 Report of the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights Title I monitoring project, parent involvement was not analyzed (Piche, McClure, & Schmelz, 1999). However, results from a Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) study of parent involvement included evaluations as one of the essential elements for effective parent involvement programs (Williams & Chavkin, 1990).

Title I programs found to be effectively serving children and families were comprehensive, targeted at both families and children, and were designed to encourage more parent collaboration in the home setting. Schools were encouraged by federal Title I guidelines to develop effective home-school relationships (D'Agostino et al., 2001). Yet, despite the billions of dollars that have been channeled into Title I and its parent involvement provisions over the years, this researcher was unable to locate any state evaluations that focused solely on evaluating Title I parent involvement. Although Title I districts and states have conducted annual evaluations and provided descriptive information regarding the operation of their local programs since the inception of Title I, these evaluations and the federal evaluations based on the district and state results have focused primarily on participants' achievement gains on norm-referenced tests in reading and mathematics (Borman & D'Agostino, 2001).

Strategies for Involving Parents

Parent involvement personnel and duties. During the past years, parent involvement personnel have been utilized by schools and districts in a variety of ways to help bridge the gap between the home and school. Both full and part-time certified and non-certified staff members, as well as parents, served as parent coordinators. As early as 1987, a full-time parent coordinator operated the Chapter 1 parent center in Natchez, Mississippi and was assisted by three part-time paraprofessional staff members (Anderson & Seppanen, 1995). Johnson (1994) reported that a Parent Coordinator who operated an elementary school parent center in Boston, Massachusetts also served as the Chapter 1 Parent Coordinator for the school. Similarly, Billig and Rutherford (1995) described how Community School District 3 in New York City had district parent activities coordinated by a program director with assistance from three staff members, as well as paid school staff members.

In 1999-2000, parent coordinators funded by Title I were present to implement parent and community involvement programs in 45 of the Austin, Texas Independent School District's 50 Title I schools (Curry, Washington, & Zyskowski, 2000). According to Freeman (2001), almost half of the nearly 800 Alabama public school principals who were surveyed reported utilizing the services of either a full-time or a part-time parent involvement employee. Wong and Meyer (2001) reported 82% of surveyed principals in schoolwide Title I schools were fortunate to have a family coordinator, whereas only 66% of the regular targeted-assistance schools had a parent coordinator. Wong and Meyer's

data came from 1993 and 1994 samples from the longitudinal study: *Prospects: The Congressionally-Mandated Study of Educational Growth and Opportunity*.

The need for parent involvement personnel has resulted in several recommendations in this area. Chavkin (2000) reported that the highest priority on the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education's (NCPIE) list of keys necessary for proper implementation of family/community involvement policies was hiring and training a coordinator whose primary focus would be to maintain contact with families and coordinate family/community activities. Chavkin further suggested that school districts might find it beneficial to hire school social workers and family/community coordinators to coordinate school and community services for families. Similarly, Epstein (1991) indicated a minimum of one full-time parent involvement coordinator should be employed at the state level, another at the district level, and another at the school or small group of schools level. Rutherford and Bernick (1995) cited the lack of parent involvement personnel as a challenge to parent involvement programs in a study conducted in Louisville, Kentucky middle schools.

Halford (1996) reported that parent coordinators were used to link a Fairfax County, Virginia elementary school to parents in the community. Similarly, Bernick and Rutherford (1995) noted that almost every Minneapolis Public Middle School had parent coordinators, even though building-level budgets funded them. Aronson (1996) also reported that part-time parent coordinators were utilized in nine Hawaii Parent Community Networking Centers.

Some programs have utilized parents to serve as parent coordinators whereas other programs have employed teachers in this role. Despite the fact that paid, stable parent center staffs are desirable to ensure consistency in the program, Johnson (1993) reported that only one-third of the 28 parent centers located in 14 states had teachers as coordinators. The remaining centers were staffed by parents or former parents from the school. According to Hiatt-Michael (2001), utilizing a parent or community coordinator to reach out into the community was critical to promoting parent involvement. Hiatt-Michael further emphasized that this saved time for teachers and administrators because it enabled the school to work through one community coordinator versus attempting to communicate with all parents within the class. Furthermore, Moles (1999) suggested that a system-wide community coordinator rather than a school-based coordinator could be employed in small school systems.

Regardless of whether employed full or part-time, parent coordinators have engaged in a variety of activities to involve families. Parent coordinators have served to conduct home visits (Anderson & Seppanen, 1995; Bernick & Rutherford, 1995; Curry, Washington, & Zyskowski, 2000; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Lope & Schultz, 1996; USDOE, 2001) and have spent time contacting parents to encourage them to participate (Aronson, 1996; USDOE, 2001) as well as conducting educational parent workshops (Aronson; Bernick & Rutherford; Curry, Washington, & Zyskowski; Johnson, 1994; Lope & Schultz). Other parent coordinators have covered classes to free teachers for parent conferences (USDOE, 2001), served as translators (Aronson; Halford, 1996), conducted

parent needs-assessment surveys (Aronson), transported parents and students (Curry, Washington, & Zyskowski), and arranged convenient times for school personnel to contact parents (Bernick & Rutherford). In addition, Halford found that parent coordinators have handled home situations that teachers or social workers might have had to handle otherwise.

Halford (1996) further stated that teachers found the services of parent coordinators to be beneficial in increasing parents' willingness and ability to provide support for their children's classroom activities. According to Halford, the parent coordinators tripled family and teacher contacts and gained the teachers' support to the extent that teachers listed parent coordinator services as a priority over their own resource needs and alternative assessment training.

In Table 2, information is presented concerning major studies that have been conducted in the area of parent involvement personnel. These studies were conducted in several states.

Staff development for parent involvement. According to Boethel (2003), if home-school partnerships are to occur, the school staff's capacity to work effectively with families needs to be strengthened. Similarly, a lack of staff training in how to work effectively with families (Redding, 2000; Rutherford & Bernick, 1995) was identified by 48% of Title I principals in a 1997 U. S. Department of Education Study (USDOE, 1997b). According to Epstein (2002a), few teachers, administrators, or district leaders have been adequately prepared to design and implement effective school-family partnerships. In many cases, parents or teachers did not know how to begin the process of developing

Table 2

Studies Relative to Parent Involvement Personnel

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Freeman (2001)	<p>Determine extent of parent involvement in Alabama's public schools</p> <p>Determine specific parent involvement activities</p> <p>Determine barriers to parent involvement</p>	796 Alabama public school principals	<p>Descriptive/ Quantitative: Survey</p> <p>Quantitative measurement techniques: frequencies percentages</p> <p>t tests</p> <p>Analysis of variance</p>	Almost 50% reported utilizing services of a full-time or a part-time parent involvement employee
Johnson (1994)	Examine role of parent centers in strengthening family-school relationships and their relationship to federal, state and local policies	Staff of parent centers in three elementary schools and one junior high school in two states; 28 parents centers in 14 states (Johnson, 1993)	<p>Qualitative: Case study</p> <p>Quantitative: Survey</p>	<p>One third of parent centers have teachers as coordinators</p> <p>Two thirds of parent centers have parents as coordinators</p> <p>One parent center staffed by a parent coordinator also serving as the school Chapter I parent coordinator</p>

relationships. Furthermore, Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez (1997) identified one barrier to preparing teachers for family involvement was the negative attitudes of all parties involved: faculty members, cooperating teachers, school administrators, and pre-service teachers.

In addition to parent involvement programs funded by Title I, other parent involvement programs exist where the same needs would be applicable. Chavkin and Williams (1987) found that training for staff and families on effective means of implementing home-school partnerships was one of the essential elements of promising family-community involvement programs identified in SEDL's study. Similarly, in a study based on 20 successful Title I programs, one of the guidelines recommended by the USDOE (2001) was to provide professional development and training for both school staffs and families. This professional development and assistance in developing effective parent involvement programs is essential for all parties who work with parents, including principals (Richardson, 1996), teachers, and parent coordinators (USDOE, 1999). Billig and Rutherford (1995) found that, unlike many districts' parent involvement training, the training in Community School District 3 in New York City included school secretaries and security guards because it was the staff's belief that it is the responsibility of all school staff members to make parents feel welcome. Baker (1997) agreed, but expanded upon the strategy by recommending that the professional support and in-service training be an on-going process. In a nationwide survey of over 400 superintendents, slightly more than 50% of those responding reported their system offered their staffs training in how to work with

parents. Although parent involvement training was offered, it was rare that parent involvement specialists led the in-service workshops or that the training occurred off-site (Baker, 1995).

Although some staff members have received professional development in parent involvement techniques, few pre-service or higher education institutions or school systems have offered professional development in developing effective home-school relationships. According to Chambers et al. (1999), during the 1997-1998 school year, 7.2 hours of professional development focused on parent or community involvement was received by classroom teachers, whereas Title I teachers reported participating in only 5.7 hours of professional development on the topic. Similarly, Chambers et al. noted only 30% of district Title I administrators reported utilizing substantial amounts of Title I funds to provide professional development opportunities on building partnerships. In a study of 161 schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States, Epstein, Sanders, and Clark (1999) reported few graduates felt adequately prepared to conduct effective family, community, and school partnerships. Although school leaders had strong beliefs about how important parent involvement is, only one course and some coverage in developing family partnerships was offered at most of the 161 institutions surveyed. Over 70% of respondents expressed a need to increase the number of courses in school, family, and community partnerships at the graduate level for administrators and counselors. In addition, over 40% of those responding stated a need to increase required courses at both the graduate and undergraduate level for future

teachers. Epstein (2002a) also recommended that both pre-service teacher education programs and graduate education programs include in their offerings classes or courses in helping teachers and administrators learn how to form home-school partnerships.

In researching teacher certification materials from 51 state departments of education, Blair (2002) reported that only 22 of the states alluded to family involvement in certification requirements. Shartrand et al. (1997) identified the state of California as the lone exception where parent involvement was required for early education work. Pre-service training in itself is not sufficient. In addition, in-service professional development training for teachers and administrators must be ongoing in order to sustain the pre-service efforts in parent involvement education.

Although 22 states required training in family involvement as part of their certification requirements, a majority of the training was taught as part of other coursework. Generally, the training was found in early childhood education or special education programs, and little was offered to pre-service elementary, middle, or high school majors (Blair, 2002). One aspect of family involvement taught in pre-service training was the skills needed to conduct parent conferences (Hiatt-Michael, 2000). However, despite the benefits of communicating through parent-teacher conferences, little or no training was reported by teachers in conducting effective parent teacher conferences (Jonson, 1999). Yet, Anderson and Seppanen (1995) reported that staff development for teachers in the implementation of procedures for the parent center, as well as

parent involvement topics such as how to conference with parents, was provided by parent center staff members. This teacher training had a two-fold purpose: to foster effective communication between teachers and parents and to train teachers in recognizing those skills for which a child needed additional help.

Table 3 displays major studies that have been conducted relative to parent involvement staff development. The studies displayed represent numerous studies that have been conducted in many states across the United States.

Communication. In addition to staff development for teachers in parent involvement strategies, teachers need assistance in how to effectively communicate with parents. According to Epstein (1995), communication is the necessary ingredient for developing successful parent involvement. Based on 35 years of research, Marzano (2003) reported that generally all schools could become more highly effective in enhancing student achievement by establishing mechanisms for communicating with parents. Lawson (2003) concurred that Title I parents believed schools should inaugurate collaboration by becoming more responsive to input from parents and to their concerns. Watkins (1997) found that the parent-perceived amount of teacher communication was a significant predictor of parent involvement. It was the communication from the children's teachers that encouraged the parents to become involved because teachers have a direct effect upon communication levels between teachers and parents.

Personal communication was the most powerful form of communication (Hiatt-Michael, 2001) and increased the likelihood that positive interaction would

Table 3

Studies Relative to Parent Involvement Staff Development

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Henderson & Mapp (2002)	Examine role of parent and community involvement on student achievement	51 research studies and literature reviews	Literature reviews (5) Interviews/ Site visits (5) Descriptive case studies (9) Correlational studies (20) Quasiexperimental (3) Experimental studies (5) Pre-experimental studies (4)	Staff development in working with families needs to be provided to all staff members, from the principal to the custodian
Baker (1997)	Investigate type, frequency, and reason for parent involvement as well as the barriers	87 teachers 84% from elementary schools diverse in size and geography	Qualitative: Focus groups Content analysis classified by topic	On-going professional support and training need to be provided for teachers

Table 3 (continued)

Studies Relative to Parent Involvement Staff Development

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Epstein, Sanders, & Clark (1999)	<p>Investigate preparation of educators to work with families</p> <p>Determine the importance college-level leaders place on family partnerships</p>	Educators in 161 U. S. schools, colleges, & departments of education (SCDEs)	<p>Quantitative: Survey</p> <p>Multiple regression analyses</p>	<p>Although most SCDEs offer a minimum of one partnership course, training is not sufficient for most educators</p> <p>SCDE leaders aware of need to prepare educators in conducting partnerships</p> <p>Major gap between SCDE & leaders' beliefs about importance for educators conducting partnerships versus their reports of limited preparation of graduates in partnerships</p>
Chavkin & Williams (1987)	<p>Establish comprehensive parent involvement information at elementary level</p> <p>Develop guidelines for parent involvement training for elementary teachers</p>	<p>Parents (n=4200)</p> <p>Superintendents (n=2538)</p> <p>School board presidents (n=2423)</p> <p>Six-state study</p>	<p>Quantitative: survey</p> <p>Descriptive statistics</p>	<p>Administrators and parents have strong interest in involving parents</p> <p>Parent involvement training should be provided for teachers</p> <p>Administrators should participate in parent involvement training</p>

occur (Epstein, 1995). According to Hiatt-Michael, this was particularly important in situations where the cultures of the school staff and home differed or where diversity of cultures had resulted in mistrust and distance among the different culture groups.

Parents' involvement in their children's education can be increased by the establishment of effective communication between parents and teachers. Shartrand et al. (1997) found that effective communication enabled parents and teachers to form working partnerships to improve the individual child's performance through open and honest communication as well as to understand each other's ideas about topics such as learning and discipline.

Parents and teachers in both Title I and non-Title I schools agreed that an increase in opportunities for parents to be involved in the school would result in improving positive communication between the home and school (Ramirez, 2001). Yet, the two groups did not concur regarding who should initiate the contact. Ramirez reported both groups felt it was the other group's responsibility for creating the positive communication. Yet, Marzano (2003) argued the school staff should initiate home-to-school communication as well as provide a welcoming atmosphere where parents would be motivated to maintain open communication. Other researchers placed the responsibility on parents. Barge and Loges (2003) reported parent-initiated contacts early in the semester are one means of opening and maintaining a line of communication with teachers. A similar study found that regardless of school size, teacher education levels, family social status, or school stability, parents would be involved and home-

school communication would occur when teachers perceived the school as having a caring atmosphere (Bauch & Goldring, 2000).

In Ramirez's 2001 study of both Title I and non-Title I schools, a majority of teachers and parents of high school students interviewed felt a lack of communication was the cause of strained relationships between the two groups. The beliefs they had toward one another limited their ability to communicate because of the fear and insecurity each felt toward the other. In fact, the parents stated they did not communicate directly with the teachers but instead utilized the child's counselor, who generally produced quicker, more productive responses. Finally, high school parents were not very involved because sufficient information and guidance about ways to become involved was not communicated by most high schools (Farkas et al., 1999; Lee, 1994). According to Ramirez, both administrators and teachers stated that improved communication between teachers and parents needed to be further developed.

Home-school relationships have been more effective when two-way communication occurred. Redding (2000) reported that children benefited academically when their parents and their teachers engaged in two-way communication. According to Williams and Chavkin (1990), two-way communication was one of seven essential parent involvement elements identified in the five state SEDL study. Concurring, Hiatt-Michael (2001) and Osborne and deOnis (1997) reported meaningful, positive, and regular two-way communication between the home and school benefited families, schools, and children. According to Hiatt-Michael, every individual is a conduit for information

and gauging school climate; therefore, schools desiring to create positive home-school communication must have the commitment of the full school and all staff members. Hiatt-Michael also noted that barriers that often separate schools and families may be removed by initiating an open door policy for families as they enter the schools and set teacher appointments.

Schools have been continually seeking new methods of communicating with parents and have been employing a variety of strategies to accomplish their goals including circulars, handbooks, and phone contacts. Similarly, Leitch and Tangri (1988) reported that parents had a desire for communication between the home and the school about issues such as attendance, good news reports, and the taught curriculum.

Belenardo, in a 2001 study of nine middle schools, reported school personnel regularly communicating with parents about their children's progress and school events resulted in parents experiencing a greater sense of community. The results of this study suggested that when parents share in the ownership of the school, those who have not been actively involved in the school obtained the information they need to become more actively involved.

A variety of communication methods have been utilized in both Title I and non-Title I schools. An inexpensive and informative means of communicating with parents has been through school newsletters (Chavkin, 2000; McCall, 1998; Redding, 2000) published by school districts, schools, and individual classrooms (Hiatt-Michael, 2001). Osborne and deOnis (1997) reported both elementary and middle school teachers indicated they used letters or memos sent home,

meetings at school, and scheduled parent-teacher conferences (Barge & Loges, 2003; McCall; Redding) as means of maintaining contact with parents. According to Chavkin, school public relations strategies were recommended by the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) to keep families, businesses, and community participants aware of parent involvement policies and programs. These strategies included newsletters, slide shows, videotapes, local newspapers, and other media.

Furthermore, parent-night experiences (Barge & Loges, 2003), as well as report cards, Happy-Grams complimenting students' work or actions, weekly home links from the classroom teacher, and assignment notebooks requiring parent signatures, were methods utilized to increase home-school communications (Redding, 2000). An additional suggestion was to post school and district educational happenings on parent resource bulletin boards (Osborne & deOnis, 1997; Redding). Freeman (2001) found that although Alabama's public Title I and non-Title I elementary schools reported inviting parents more often to school meetings, sending home more written communication, and visiting more in the children's homes, the high school principals reported utilizing the telephone more frequently. Yet, home visiting was reported in the Christenson and Hurley 1997 study as one of the least desired activities by parents.

To enhance communication with both Title I and non-Title I parents and the community, school staffs have been taking advantage of current technology. Yet, using new technology may have served as a barrier in some situations. Teacher web pages have been created where teachers post their syllabi and

other class information such as homework (Ramirez, 2001), thereby making it easily available to those families with access to computers. According to Ramirez (1999), this may have resulted in more social distance between the home and the school in situations where families did not have the educational or financial means to access technology. Realizing all homes did not have Internet access, teachers suggested that parents access the information utilizing a computer either on-site at a school or at a public library (Ramirez, 2001). Freeman (2001) noted that keeping parents informed via e-mail and school web pages was utilized most often by Alabama middle schools, followed by high schools.

New technology increased opportunities for communication with parents when schools provided electronic mail options and voice mail messages (Osborne & deOnis, 1997). Similar findings by Cameron and Kang (1997) found the number of contacts with teachers doubled by parents in a study utilizing a voice-mail system as the primary means of communication. Furthermore, Barge and Loges (2003) indicated information technology systems that provided both incoming and outgoing voice mail capabilities supplied more opportunities for teachers and parents to communicate.

Sanders (2001) reported effective communication could not occur between school staffs and families unless staff members understood the parenting issues faced by families and knew the educational background and native language of those served. Despite the employment of an extensive selection of strategies, communication continued to be difficult for those who spoke another language or were illiterate. Pena (2000) indicated schools could

increase participation of Mexican-American parents by providing translators. In addition to the services of a parent involvement teacher, two migrant home-school coordinators and one minority recruiter increased communication between the home and the school at a Dade City, Florida school (Hiatt-Michael, 2001). Based on a study of successful parent involvement programs in 20 Title I schools, a United States Department of Education guideline suggested schools develop effective communication that accommodated the language and cultural needs of staff members and families (USDOE, 2001). Similarly, Pena noted the information needed to be translated into the parents' native language.

According to Pena (2000), regular communication must occur between the school staff and parents who have limited education skills. Social networks need to be established to assist those parents who are illiterate and unable to read written communication. This is crucial, since a majority of the communication between schools and homes is written. According to Baker (1997), teachers reported six different forms of school-to-home communication. Baker noted school-sponsored scheduled meetings and conferences were one means of informing parents about school rules, general behavior, and performance expectations, and discussing individuals concerns about a student. Yet, according to Baker, teachers blamed parents' lack of attendance on apathy. Baker reported another method of teacher and parent communication was informal meetings while the parent was on campus to volunteer or to pick up or drop off the child. Most teachers utilized telephone calls to introduce themselves, remind parents of special events, provide positive feedback, and discuss

concerns. Baker also found home visits were seldom utilized by teachers as a means of maintaining communication with parents because of safety concerns for the teachers. Teachers also sent written information home regarding the child's progress via portfolio assessments, report cards, or progress reports. According to Baker, written documents of school policies and teacher expectations were the final form of communication mentioned by teachers.

Studies conducted relative to parent involvement communication are displayed in Table 4. These studies were conducted in elementary and high schools across the United States.

Incentives. Parent involvement coordinators and school personnel utilized a variety of strategies to engage parents, such as incentives. According to Lawson (2003), although incentives may have been a popular strategy for getting parents involved, teachers perceived them to be bribery tactics. Lawson noted this created value conflicts for teachers who viewed parent involvement as a fundamental responsibility of parents. Richardson (1996) found the level of parent involvement was slightly impacted by the use of rewards and incentives. Not only were parents offered incentives, but teachers were often recognized for their parent involvement efforts, as well, though it was more infrequent. This recognition was in the form of financial compensation or compliments. Title I funds were utilized to compensate teachers who conducted evening or weekend workshops for parents at Ferguson Elementary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (USDOE, 2001). Christenson and Hurley (1997) indicated that, in order to create the time for teachers to form parent partnerships, it may be necessary to

Table 4

Studies Relative to Parent Involvement Communication

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Baker (1997)	Investigate type, frequency, and reason for parent involvement as well as the barriers	87 teachers 84% from elementary schools diverse in size and geography	Qualitative: Focus groups Content analysis classified by topic	Identified six types of beneficial home-school communication: Scheduled meetings/conferences Informal meetings Phone calls Home visits (limited due to safety concerns) Written progress reports Written school & teacher policies Home and school parent involvement are beneficial
Ramirez (2001)	Investigate parent involvement in U. S. high schools	4 high schools in 2 states 50 teachers 25 parents 8 administrators	Qualitative: Sampling Interviews Observation Document review Analysis: Constant comparative model	Parents & teachers agreed the lack of communication strained parent-teacher relationships Parents and teachers put responsibility for communication on each other Parents communicated through the counselor rather than through the teacher Most phone calls home related to negative situations

alter their school schedules or contracts. According to Davies (2002), if teachers and administrators are to be encouraged to make the connections between home and school, incentives must be provided. Davies noted the incentives could range from having a paid parent coordinator to assist in the school, public recognition, or pay increases or promotions, when possible. Freeman (2001) reported 57.7% of the Alabama public school principals responding always or usually recognized teachers and parents for their parent involvement efforts.

Programming and Involvement Strategies

Parent resource centers. Although a number of federal, state, and local policies mandated parent involvement, "none of these parent involvement policies require the establishment of parent centers in schools" (Johnson, 1994, p. 25). Yet, parent centers are a means of meeting mandates and promoting greater parent participation in schools. According to Johnson, even though the main goal of participating in parent centers was to help their own and other children succeed in school, parents stated that involvement in their school's parent center enhanced their own growth. Schools that established parent centers had a two-fold purpose: to make parents feel more welcome at school and to increase their involvement in their children's education. Johnson (1993, 2001) observed that in the five-year period prior to the 1991 study of 28 schools, 26 of the schools had created parent centers. In a 1994 sample of Title I principals, parent resource centers were in 58% of the Title I schoolwide schools surveyed, whereas slightly more than one third of principals in regular Title I schools reported access to parent resource centers (Wong & Meyer, 2001). Both

district- and state-run parent resource centers benefited from schools fostering school-family partnerships (USDOE, 1997b). Similarly, a study of 28 schools with parent centers reported family-school communication increased due to collaboration between families and schools through parent centers (Johnson, 1993). At the time of the 1996 study of 20 schools and districts, parent resource centers were operating in 37% of Title I schools reporting and were under development in an additional 14% (Johnson, 2001). Yet, in a nationwide study, Christenson and Hurley (1997) reported that parent centers were one of the activities least desired by parents.

A variety of activities have been conducted in the parent centers. Creating parent resource rooms where parents received notices about school and district happenings and browsed and checked out educational materials for use in the home was another strategy for increasing communication between parents and schools (Osborne & deOnis, 1997). In a Mississippi parent center, Chapter I staff members worked with referred parents as they learned how to utilize take-home materials, attended parenting and computer workshops, and checked out computers for home use (Anderson & Seppanen, 1995). Parents were receptive to the idea of having materials available for checkout through schools, parent centers, and lending libraries.

In an effort to assist families in strengthening student achievement, schools need to provide training and resources such as books and other materials to support early literacy (Boethel, 2003). The standardized test scores of children whose parents were involved over a three-year period in school and

home learning activities through a parent center went from below average to well above average (Johnson, 1994). Over 60% of respondents had utilized the services of the parent bus, a mobile resource center that visited each of the 13 schools in Ware County, Georgia every two weeks (Richardson, 1996).

D'Agostino et al. (2001) reported parents were more involved in helping their children at home when the school's comprehensive Title I parent involvement program offered learning materials for families to take home. The establishment of Parent Community Networking Centers in nine Hawaii elementary schools resulted in a more hospitable environment for parents. The main focus of these centers was to provide resources and a home base for parents (Aronson, 1996).

Workshops. One of the resources provided by the parent centers has been parent workshops. In a review of promising parent involvement programs, Baker (1995) identified parent workshops as a means of improving parent involvement. In addition, Freeman's 2001 study indicated 69.5% of the Title I schools in Alabama offered parent workshops compared to 30.5% of the non-Title I schools.

In Table 5, information is presented concerning major studies in the area of parent involvement strategies. These studies were conducted in several states in elementary, junior high/middle, and high schools.

Decision making. While schools utilized a variety of strategies to communicate with parents, another means employed to involve parents was through the decision-making process. Although education reformers and elected officials were emphasizing the empowerment of parents to assume a greater

Table 5

Studies Relative to Parent Involvement Strategies

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Johnson (1994)	Examine role of parent centers in strengthening family-school relationships and their relationship to federal, state and local policies	Staff of parent centers in three elementary schools and one junior high school in two states; 28 parent centers in 14 states (Johnson, 1993)	Qualitative: Case study Quantitative: Survey	Strategies to promote family-school partnerships: Childcare Parent centers Take-home materials Achievement gains posted by children of involved parents Difficult to specify parent involvement funding and separate it from other programs No federal, state, or local policies require the establishment of parent centers

Table 5 (continued)

Studies Relative to Parent Involvement Strategies

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Henderson & Mapp (2002)	Examine role of parent and community involvement on student achievement	51 research studies and literature reviews	Literature reviews (5) Interviews/site visits (5) Descriptive case studies (9) Correlational studies (20) Quasiexperimental (3) Experimental studies (5) Pre-experimental studies (4)	Strategies pre-k through high school should utilize: home visits, lending libraries, workshops, translation services, childcare, meals, and transportation Involvement of families: improves the students' academic performance, attendance, and behavior; results in students staying in school and pursuing higher education
Freeman (2001)	Determine extent of parent involvement in Alabama's public schools Determine specific parent involvement activities Determine barriers to parent involvement	796 Alabama public school principals	Descriptive/Quantitative: Survey Quantitative measurement techniques: frequencies percentages t tests Analysis of variance	60% of districts provide parent resource area Title I schools implement more classes, workshops, and services than non-Title I schools Level of involvement differs significantly between grade levels

leadership role, few parents were ready to participate more in the governance of schools. Similarly, teachers were not enthusiastic about parents participating in school governance in areas such as designing curriculum and hiring staff. Even though teachers and parents agreed that parents should be involved in school volunteering such as chaperoning field trips and helping with career days or book sales, both groups concurred that the most important activity for parents was to check homework and encourage the children to learn (Farkas et al., 1999).

Joyce Epstein, who has conducted numerous studies regarding the involvement of parents in preschool, elementary, middle, and high schools, has developed a framework of six types of family partnership involvement. Decision making, one of Epstein's activity types, included families as participants in school decisions and the development of parents as leaders and parent representatives (Simon & Epstein, 2001). O'Connor (2001) further expanded the idea by recommending schools make positions available to parents to enable them to be active participants on curriculum planning committees and site-based decision-making committees. Although federal law did not require any type of site-based management, 96.7% of urban school districts reported an increase in Title I parent participation in local school decision making (Council of the Great City Schools, 1999). Alabama parents, serving in not-so-traditional roles as members of advisory councils, assisted in determining school policies. Freeman (2001) reported 14% of parents of Alabama public school children always had input into the creation of school budgets, whereas only 3% always had input into the teacher selection process. Boone (2002) reported that parents were more

involved in decision making at the middle and high school levels than elementary levels.

Allowing parents to be a part of the decision-making process has been beneficial for schools. Aronson (1996) found parent participation in school activities increased by 45%, on the average, in the nine Hawaii schools that implemented site-based management. Parents, as well as community members, served on the council, along with staff members, and participated in making school-level and policy decisions (Aronson). Furthermore, Aronson indicated parent participation on these councils resulted in an increase in parent-teacher communication, contact with other school staff, volunteering in both the school and the children's classrooms, and PTA or site-based management meetings.

Although parents derived benefits from being actively involved in making school decisions, there were several areas in which they were not utilized to assist in making decisions. In a United States Department of Education (1997b) study, it was noted that although 78% of Title I schools utilized parent advisory councils, a little less than 50% involved parents in either decisions regarding the allocation of funds and/or discipline procedures.

Other parents did not understand why parents should be involved in the decision-making process. Parents did not visualize their role to be decision makers, partners, and collaborators. Instead, they viewed themselves more as supporters, helpers, and fund raisers (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). In certain situations, simply attending school meetings was the involvement level of some parents.

Summary

Involving parents in their children's education has had a rich history, although it has recently gained national attention through efforts to restructure schools and hold schools to a higher degree of accountability through federal initiatives such as the *No Child Left Behind Act*. While several federal programs have parent involvement components, Title I is the largest, maximizing federal resources and utilizing research-based strategies for involving parents in their children's education. Studies relative to parent involvement barriers, personnel, staff development, communication, and strategies were presented in Chapter II.

Many advantages to involving parents were presented in the literature review, such as improved student achievement, better attendance, improved behavior, more classes passed, and more positive attitudes. Teachers found it beneficial to have parents involved, resulting in higher teacher morale. Despite the 30 years of research documenting the evidence that student achievement increases through parent involvement, some research was presented reflecting researchers' conclusions that parent involvement alone does not make a difference on student achievement. Other researchers questioned the methods utilized and determined that the data collection techniques lacked rigor.

Although many advantages of involving parents were identified, a wealth of research has been conducted on barriers that exist, as well. Barriers noted in the literature included time constraints, childcare, transportation, language differences, family issues, socioeconomic issues, and work schedules.

The role of the Title I administrator was discussed since involving parents is under the umbrella of responsibilities of a Title I administrator, including the development of state, district, and school parent involvement policies. Title I administrators manage the funds that ultimately are utilized to implement the research-based parent involvement strategies and hire parent involvement personnel. It was reported that parent coordinators are employed on both a full-time and part-time basis and are utilized in a variety of ways, such as conducting home visits, contacting parents, conducting parent workshops, and serving as translators. In addition, the importance of establishing effective two-way communication between parents and teachers was discussed. Several of the parent communication methods included school newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, letters sent home with the children, parent-night experiences, email, and web pages. Other research-based strategies identified were the use of incentives for parents and teachers, parent resource centers, and workshops. Both positive and negative issues in regard to involving parents in the decision-making process were discussed in the literature.

The issue of parent involvement staff development opportunities for district and school administrators, teachers, and staff members was examined. It was reported that few pre-service or higher education institutions or school systems had offered staff development in creating/nurturing home-school relationships. Less than one-fourth of the states required parent involvement training as part of their certification requirements.

The development of successful and meaningful home-school partnerships has been dependent upon the support given by state and district leaders. Despite the numerous studies regarding parent involvement conducted over the years, the majority of these studies have been conducted among school-level personnel and parents. This study will add to the body of parent involvement literature by describing the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators. Throughout history, the issue has arisen concerning what might be the most appropriate means that school staffs who are seeking to actively involve parents in their children's education could employ. While the impetus toward parent involvement has increased with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, to date no studies of parent involvement involving all Title I district-level school administrators in Georgia have been located. This chapter presents the methodology utilized, including the research questions answered as a result of this study, the population, the research design, the instrumentation, the procedures, and the data analysis.

Research Questions

The overarching research question addressed in this study was: What are the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators? To determine the current parent involvement practices, the researcher focused on the following subquestions:

1. What strategies are utilized for involving parents in their children's education, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?
2. What do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report as techniques or strategies their district personnel use for communicating with parents?

3. What barriers hinder parent involvement initiatives, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?
4. What personnel do Georgia Title I district-level administrators utilize to implement parent involvement programs?
5. What staff development do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report being made available for teachers and administrators in parent involvement?

Population

The target population surveyed for this study was Georgia district-level administrators who are directly responsible for their school district's Title I program (N = 179). The original target population of 180 was decreased by 1 to 179 after the researcher's own district was removed. These individuals were selected because the implementation of parent involvement programs is under the umbrella of their professional responsibilities. The entire population was utilized in an effort to obtain more reliable results than a sample would have produced. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) stated that educational surveys generally have a high response rate because a homogeneous group is targeted. The Title I administrators were identified by the Georgia Title I office, and the mailing information was obtained from the *2005 Georgia Public Education Directory* (Georgia Department of Education, 2005). Ten of these individuals were chosen to participate in the pilot study. The remaining administrators (N = 169) comprised the population of this study. Responses were received from 104 subjects, yielding a 61.5% response rate. Of those responding, only one Title I

district-level administrator declined to participate, which resulted in a final sample size of 103.

Research Design

A descriptive study describes achievement, attitudes, behaviors, or other characteristics of a group of subjects and assesses the present conditions of the evaluated situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The descriptive method was most appropriate for this study because the proposed research attempted to determine the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators. The survey was cross-sectional due to the data being collected at one point in time (Creswell, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher) in order to provide a single-time description (Babbie, 1990).

A survey was selected as the data collection tool for this descriptive study. Babbie (1990) found that surveys can assist the researcher in discovering the distributions of certain traits or attitudes. Babbie also reported that the survey method was useful for obtaining knowledge and understanding to be used to provide a description rather than an explanation of differences. Several other advantages of employing the survey as a means of collecting data included the reduced cost of studying large populations and the shorter period of time necessary to complete the research (Creswell, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). According to Gall et al. (1996), another advantage was that the questions on the survey were standardized for the respondents. The utilization of survey research allowed participants to take as much time as they desired to complete

the survey at a time that was convenient to their schedules. Additionally, the respondents could choose the order in which they answered the survey items, and they could also skip questions if they desired to do so.

Instrumentation

Since the researcher was unsuccessful in locating an appropriate survey instrument for measuring the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools, a survey was developed that encompassed these parent involvement topics: strategies, methods of communication, barriers, personnel, and staff development opportunities. The proposed instrument was reviewed by a panel of five experts (see Appendix A) to establish content validity. According to Creswell (2003), content validity is defined as items measuring what they were intended to measure. These experts were state department personnel employed as regional Title I administrators. The comments from the panel of experts were incorporated into the final instrument. Only a minor change was recommended regarding the survey title.

The instrument (see Appendix B) was developed with concern for the respondents' ease of completion. Miller and Salkind (2002) reported that easy completion surveys increased the return rate. The survey began with a brief statement of purpose. The instrument consisted of five major sections corresponding to the research questions and included a section on demographics. Section I consisted of 16 Likert-scaled items that answered the first research question regarding parent involvement strategies. Likert-scaled items were utilized where the respondents' frequency in employing various

strategies was determined by the Likert-scaled items being marked “Always,” “Frequently,” “Sometimes,” or “Never.” Section I also included the following four checklists: frequency of parent activities, parent workshop staffs, location of parent resource centers, and availability of materials for parent resource centers. Three open-ended questions solicited responses regarding successful and least successful strategies used by districts as well as parent involvement topics or purchased programs district administrators would recommend to other schools.

The second research question examining parent communication methods was the topic in Section II. This section consisted of a checklist of parent communication methods and an open-ended question regarding communication methods school districts and schools have utilized successfully. Section III used a checklist to answer the third research question examining possible barriers to parent involvement initiatives as well as an open-ended question identifying the greatest parent involvement barriers in the districts. Respondents had the option of writing their own responses in the open-ended “Other” questions that concluded both Section II and Section III.

The fourth research question examining parent involvement personnel was answered in Section IV and was divided into two checklists. One checklist examined district-level personnel and another examined school-level personnel. Section IV concluded with an open-ended response regarding district uses of parent involvement personnel. Information for the final research question was based on responses through two checklists dealing with parent involvement staff development. Participants marked checklists regarding staff members who had

been afforded parent involvement staff development and the means of delivery for the staff development. Section V concluded with an open-ended question concerning the importance of parent involvement training. A demographic section that utilized checklist responses was included where the participants identified the number of years in their present position and the number of students in the district. Participants also reported the number of schoolwide and targeted assistance programs operated. The final open-ended response on the survey was one in which respondents described the staff development in parent involvement they personally had received, particularly in the past four years. A survey instrument correlation grid was created to show the relationship between the items in the survey and the supporting literature (see Table 6).

Procedures

The proposed survey instrument and proposed cover letter (see Appendix C) were submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia Southern University for its approval. Once the final approval was received from the IRB (see Appendix D), ten Title I district-level administrators were chosen to complete the survey for the pilot test, to "provide suggestions to improve clarity and format" of the survey, and to provide an estimate of survey completion time (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 307). The response rate for the pilot test was 70%, and no changes were suggested nor were any problems in completing the survey identified by the respondents. According to Gall et al. (1996), this sample group should be selected from the pool of respondents to be utilized for this research study. The sample group was selected so they were distributed in

Table 6

Parent Involvement Survey Instrument Correlation Grid

Research Question	Parent Involvement Instrument	Literature Base
1. What strategies are utilized for involving parents in their children's education, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?	Sections: I A – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 I B, I C, I D, I E, I F, I G	Aronson, 1996 Baker, 1995 Epstein, 2002b Henderson & Mapp, 2002 D'Agostino, Hedges, Wong, & Borman, 2001 Freeman, 2001 Halford, 1996 Pena, 2000 Ramirez, 2001 Richardson, 1996 Rutherford & Bernick, 1995 Simon & Epstein, 2001 USDOE, 2001
2. What do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report as techniques or strategies their district personnel use for communicating with parents?	Sections: II A, II B	Baker, 1997 Barge & Loges, 2003 Chavkin, 2000 Freeman, 2001 Hiatt-Michael, 2001 Osborne & deOnis, 1997 Ramirez, 1999 Ramirez, 2001
3. What barriers hinder parent involvement initiatives, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?	Sections: III A, III B	Baker, 1995 Bernick, Swenson, & Rutherford, 1995 Billig & Rutherford, 1995 Epstein & Conners, 1995 Pena, 2000 Ramirez, 2001 Richardson, 1996 Rutherford & Bernick, 1995 Sanders, 1999 USDOE, 1999 USDOE, 2001

Table 6 (continued)

Parent Involvement Survey Instrument Correlation Grid

Research Question	Parent Involvement Instrument	Literature Base
4. What personnel do Georgia Title I district-level administrators have available to implement parent involvement programs?	Sections: IV A, IV B, IV C	Anderson & Seppanen, 1995 Freeman, 2001 Hiatt-Michael, 2001 Moles, 1999 Rutherford & Bernick, 1995 USDOE, 1997b USDOE, 2001
5. What staff development do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report being made available for teachers and administrators in parent involvement?	Section: V	Anderson & Seppanen, 1995 Billig & Rutherford, 1995 Chambers, et. al., 1999 Epstein, Sanders, & Clark, 1999 Epstein, 2002a Richardson, 1996 Sanders & Clerk, 1999 Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997 USDOE, 1999 USDOE, 2001

the same way as the population as a whole (Fowler, 1993). To obtain a representative group, ten districts were selected based on district size and geographic area of the state. Upon completion of the pilot test, the cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and the survey instrument were mailed to Georgia Title I district-level school administrators (N=169). The cover letter requested the survey be returned within a two-week period, per the recommendation of Gall et al. (1996).

A self-addressed, stamped return envelope was enclosed as a convenience to the respondents (Gall et al., 1996) in an effort to obtain a minimum 60% return rate. Miller and Salkind (2002) found that response rates were higher when return postage was included. Although a high completion rate of 70% was desirable, a response rate of 60% was considered good and an adequate response rate for analysis and reporting would be 50%, according to Babbie (1990). In an effort to increase the number of respondents, the participants were afforded an opportunity to receive via e-mail a copy of the results of the study (Miller & Salkind). An additional attempt to increase the completion rate was made by sending a reminder postcard (see Appendix E). Because the study was being conducted during the last few weeks of the school year, the reminder postcard was not sent out until three weeks after the initial mailing. Follow-up was also made through e-mail, personal phone calls, and faxes. Six weeks after the initial mailing, the researcher mailed a second request for participation (see Appendix F) with an additional copy of the survey.

Data Analysis

Upon receipt of the survey responses, the data were analyzed by frequency and percentage of responses. Demographic variables regarding respondents' years of experience as Title I district administrator and parent involvement staff development, as well as the student population size and number of Title I schoolwide and targeted assistance schools in the district, were also analyzed.

Summary

This study attempted to identify the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators. The population for the study was all Title I district-level school administrators identified by the Georgia Title I office. After the proposed instrument was reviewed by 5 Title I regional administrators to establish content validity, a pilot test was conducted utilizing 10 Title I district-level school administrators. Upon receipt of approval by the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University, the survey instrument covering parent involvement strategies, methods of communication, barriers, personnel, and staff development opportunities was mailed to potential participants. Follow-up reminders were sent 3 and 6 weeks after the initial mailing. The data were analyzed by frequency and percentage of responses.

CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The researcher's purpose was to investigate the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators. Georgia Title I district-level school administrators were asked to complete a parent involvement practices survey administered in May 2005.

Research Questions

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings and discussion of the analysis of the data as guided by the overarching research question: What are the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I Schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators? Detailed findings and discussion of the analysis of data were also guided by the following specific research subquestions:

1. What strategies are utilized for involving parents in their children's education, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?
2. What do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report as techniques or strategies their district personnel use for communicating with parents?
3. What barriers hinder parent involvement initiatives, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?
4. What personnel do Georgia Title I district-level administrators utilize to implement parent involvement programs?

5. What staff development do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report being made available for teachers and administrators in parent involvement?

Survey Response Rate

For this quantitative study, data were collected from one population, Title I district-level school administrators in Georgia. This population represented 169 Georgia school systems. The survey return rate was 61.5% ($n = 104$) of the total population ($N = 169$). Of those responding, only one of the district-level administrators declined to participate while the remainder completed the survey.

Demographic Data for Population

Demographic data reported by Georgia Title I district administrators are presented in Table 7. The majority of the survey participants, 65.3% ($n = 64$), had been serving as their district's Title I coordinator 5 years or less. Only 4.1% ($n = 4$) of the respondents had served in this capacity for 21 or more years.

Fifty-four percent ($n = 54$) of the 100 participants responding to this question worked in school districts that serve between 1,000 and 4,999 students. Only 2% ($n = 2$) of the respondents served districts with 50,000 or more students. Other demographic data included the number of schoolwide programs displayed in Table 8. Only 9.1% ($n = 9$) of the 99 participants responding did not operate any schoolwide Title I programs. Over 61.6% ($n = 61$) of the participants operating schoolwide programs operated between 1 and 4 Title I schoolwide programs. Only one of the districts operated 80 schoolwide Title I programs, the largest number of schoolwide schools reported.

Table 7

Demographic Data Reported by Georgia Title I District Administrators

Demographic Category	Percentage	n
Years as District Title I Administrator		
0 - 5 Years	65.3%	64
6 - 10 Years	15.3	15
11 - 20 Years	15.3	15
21+ Years	4.1	4
Number of Students in District		
0 - 999	12.0	12
1,000 - 4,999	54.0	54
5,000 - 9,999	19.0	19
10,000 - 49,000	13.0	13
50,000+	2.0	2

Note. Years as District Title I Administrator N = 98

Number of Students in District N = 100

Table 8

Frequency of Schoolwide Title I Programs in Georgia

Number of Schoolwide Programs	Percentage	n
0	9.1%	9
1	12.1	12
2	18.2	18
3	17.2	17
4	14.1	14
5	7.1	7
6	4.0	4
7	3.0	3
8	5.1	5
9	3.0	3
10	2.0	2
11	1.0	1
13	1.0	1
26	2.0	2
80	1.0	1

Note. N = 99

Table 9 displays the frequency of targeted assistance Title I programs in Georgia. A majority, 64.9% (n = 63), of the districts did not operate any targeted assistance Title I programs. Of the districts reporting targeted assistance programs, 14.4% (n = 14) operated only one targeted assistance program. Only one of the districts operated eight targeted assistance schools, the largest number of targeted assistance schools reported.

Findings

Parent Involvement Strategies

Research subquestion 1: What strategies are utilized for involving parents in their children's education, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?

In the first research subquestion, the researcher examined what strategies were utilized for involving parents in their children's education as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators. Table 10 presents responses from Georgia Title I district-level school administrators regarding the frequency of the parent involvement strategies utilized in their Title I schools. Of the Title I administrators responding that did provide transportation, 42.6% (n = 43) only provide transportation sometimes. Another 47.5% (n = 48) never provided transportation. The parent involvement strategies mentioned by the majority of respondents as used most often (always or frequently) were on-site workshops (85.3%, n = 85), door prizes/incentives (73.6%, n = 75), meals (64.7%, n = 66), and evening workshops (61.8%, n = 63). A majority of respondents reported their districts used the following strategies only sometimes: parent workshops during the school day (52.5%, n = 53) and meetings held in community buildings

Table 9
 Frequency of Targeted Assistance Title I Programs in Georgia

Number of Targeted Assistance Programs	Percentage	n
0	64.9%	63
1	14.4	14
2	7.2	7
3	3.1	3
4	5.2	5
5	4.1	4
8	1.0	1

Note. N = 97

Table 10

Frequency of Parent Involvement Strategies in Georgia Title I Schools

Workshop Strategy	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	N
Transportation	4.0%	5.9%	42.6%	47.5%	101
Childcare	24.8	28.7	30.7	15.8	101
Door prizes/incentives	26.5	47.1	20.6	5.9	102
Meals	23.5	41.2	26.5	8.8	102
Translators, when necessary	18.6	14.7	43.1	23.5	102
Evaluations	41.4	17.2	32.3	9.1	99
Fliers/newsletters in parent's native language	32.7	26.7	24.8	15.8	101
On-site workshops	51.0	34.3	14.7	0.0	102
In community buildings	2.0	12.7	52.0	33.3	102
Summer workshops	2.9	2.9	38.2	55.9	102
Teacher compensation for workshops	13.7	17.6	31.4	37.3	102
Teacher release time	4.0	16.8	38.6	40.6	101
During school day	3.0	32.7	52.5	11.9	101
Evening workshops	14.7	47.1	33.3	4.9	102
Saturday workshops	2.9	3.9	41.2	52.0	102
Workshops with PTA	2.9	45.1	48.0	3.9	102

(52.0%, n = 53). The parent involvement strategies never used by over half of the districts included summer workshops (55.9%, n = 57) and Saturday workshops (52.0%, n = 53).

In addition to reporting the frequency of strategy use, Title I district administrators were asked in an open-ended question to provide information regarding what strategies had been the most successful and the least successful in their districts. The most successful strategies reported followed by the number of survey participants reporting it included workshops with meals (n = 38), workshops with an activity or PTA (n = 21), workshops with childcare (n = 21), and door prizes and incentives (n = 18). The least successful strategy reported followed by the number of survey participants reporting it was daytime workshops (n = 11). Transportation was named by nine of the participants as an unsuccessful strategy. According to Participant 50, "Transportation was not needed as much as we think [*sic*]." Eight survey participants reported evening workshops had been unsuccessful.

Another topic about which Title I administrators were asked to provide information for the researcher to examine was the frequency of parent activities. Table 11 presents responses from Title I district-level administrators for the frequency of parent activities sponsored by grade level. In regard to the frequency of sponsoring parent activities, 39.2% (n = 40) of the primary/elementary schools and 33.3% (n = 34) of the middle schools sponsored parent activities once per grading period, whereas 25.5% (n = 26) of the high schools held parent activities one time a semester. No parent involvement

Table 11

Frequency of Parent Activities Sponsored by Grade Level

School Level	1 per month	2 per month	1 per grading pd.	1 per semester	Other	None
Primary/ Elementary	30.4%	11.8%	39.2%	13.7%	4.9%	0.0%
Middle	17.6	4.9	33.3	17.6	2.9	23.5
High	5.9	3.9	16.7	25.5	5.9	42.2

Note. N = 102

activities were reported as being conducted in 42.2% (n = 43) of the high schools. It was also noted that 100.0% of the primary/elementary schools offered parent activities, whereas only 76.3% of the middle schools and 57.9% of the high schools offered parent activities.

Title I district-level school administrators were also asked to provide information regarding parent workshops. A majority, 53.9% (n = 55), of the parent workshops were reported as being taught by teachers in the sponsoring school. School-level parent involvement personnel were used by 36.3% (n = 37) of the districts to teach parent workshops, and another 31.4% (n = 32) reported utilizing a district-wide parent involvement coordinator. Outside parent involvement consultants were utilized by only 18.6% (n = 19) of the school districts to teach parent workshops.

When requested, in an open-ended question, to identify parent involvement topics that the districts and schools had successfully utilized in parent workshops and would recommend to others, 20 of the survey participants identified testing topics, particularly the CRCT. Reading activities were identified by 15 of the participants as a common workshop topic. The most commonly identified purchased parent involvement program, PASSport (Parents Assuring Student Success), was recommended by 14 of the participants.

In addition to reporting about parent workshops, Title I district-level administrators were also asked to provide information in regard to parent resource centers. In response to the location of parent resource centers, 73.3% (n = 74) of the primary/elementary schools provided centers, whereas only 40.6%

(n = 41) of the middle schools and 14.9% (n = 15) of the high schools had a parent resource center. Slightly more than 83% (83.2%, n = 84) of the districts reported they had parent centers in operation. Almost all of the districts, 91.7% (n = 77) sponsoring parent resource centers, allowed parent checkout of materials for use in the home.

Parent Communication Methods

Research subquestion 2: What do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report as techniques or strategies their district personnel use for communicating with parents?

In the second research subquestion, the researcher investigated the techniques or strategies district personnel use to communicate with parents as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators. Table 12 presents reports from Title I district-level administrators for the parent communication methods they reported their districts or schools utilize. Parent communication methods most often utilized by districts or schools were school newsletters/fliers (96.1%, n = 98), parent-teacher conferences (92.2%, n = 94), open houses (92.2%, n = 94), and notes/progress reports sent home with children (91.2%, n = 93). It was noted that over half of the districts had communicated with parents through the use of technology, using school and district web pages. Communication methods used infrequently included home visits by teachers (31.4%, n = 32), computerized phone calls (33.3%, n = 34), and the mailing of district letters (34.3%, n = 35).

Table 12

Parent Communication Methods Districts or Schools Utilize

Communication Method	Percentage
School newsletters/fliers	96.1%
Open houses	92.2
Parent teacher conferences	92.2
Notes/progress reports sent home by children	91.2
Newspaper articles	87.3
Phone calls	84.3
District web page	72.5
School letter mailed	67.6
School web page	67.6
District newsletters/fliers	53.9
Notes/progress reports mailed home	47.1
Home visits by parent involvement coordinators	45.1
E-mail	44.1
Radio announcements	42.2
District letter mailed	34.3
Computerized phone calls	33.3
Home visits by teachers	31.4

Note. N = 102

An open-ended question was utilized to elicit responses regarding the communication methods the districts and schools had used successfully in communicating with parents. The communication method that had been the most successful in Georgia Title I schools, as reported by 32 participants, was school newsletters/fliers. Other successful communication methods were phone calls (n = 23), parent teacher conferences (n = 20), open houses (n = 20), home visits by parent involvement coordinators (n = 18), notes/progress reports and letters sent home by the children (n = 17), and district (n = 15) and school (n = 15) web pages.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Research subquestion 3: What barriers hinder parent involvement initiatives, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators?

In the third research subquestion, the researcher concentrated on the barriers that hinder parent involvement initiatives, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level administrators. Table 13 presents results regarding barriers that hinder parent involvement initiatives. Of the three most frequently reported barriers, two dealt specifically with parents. Parent time was cited as a barrier by 64.7% (n = 52) of the survey participants, and parent attitudes were a barrier in 51.0% (n = 52) of the respondents' districts. Lack of transportation hampered parent initiatives in 59.8% (n = 61) of the districts. Survey participants reported the following barriers would least likely hinder parent initiatives: staff development (1%, n = 1), administrative support (4.9%, n = 5), lack of parent resource centers (6.9%, n = 7), and lack of translators (8.8%, n = 9).

Table 13

Barriers that Hinder Parent Involvement Initiatives as Reported by Title I District-level Administrators

Barrier	Percentage
Parent time	64.7%
Transportation	59.8
Parent attitudes	51.0
Teacher time	31.4
Limited personnel	28.4
Language differences	19.6
Teacher attitudes	18.6
Communication	16.7
Funds	16.7
Childcare	15.7
Lack of translators	8.8
Lack of parent centers	6.9
Administrative support	4.9
Staff development	1.0

Note. N = 102

Title I administrators were also asked, through an open-ended question, to report the greatest parent involvement barriers in their districts. Parent time was the most commonly named barrier, as reported by 28 survey participants. According to Participant 70, the barrier is "working parents with too little time." Transportation and parent attitudes/motivation each were reported by 22 participants as barriers hindering parent involvement initiatives. Finally, Participant 59 stated, "Parents who need it the most usually don't participate."

Parent Involvement Personnel

Research subquestion 4: What personnel do Georgia Title I district-level administrators utilize to implement Title I parent involvement programs?

In research subquestion 4, the researcher addressed the district-wide (see Table 14) and school-based personnel (see Table 15) utilized by Title I administrators in parent involvement programs. A majority of the districts did not employ any certified or non-certified district-wide parent involvement coordinators. Only 26.5% (n = 27) of the participants reported employing full-time certified district-wide parent involvement personnel, and 22.5% (n = 23) employed part-time certified district-wide parent involvement personnel. District-wide personnel least likely to be employed were part-time non-certified personnel (9.8%, n = 10).

Another focus of the researcher was to investigate the school-based personnel employed to conduct parent involvement activities. The results were similar by school level, regardless of the type of personnel employed. No high schools (100%, N = 101) employed any full-time certified school-based parent

Table 14

District-wide Parent Involvement Personnel

Type of District-wide Parent Involvement Personnel	Percentage
Full-time certified	26.5%
Part-time certified	22.5
Full-time non-certified	12.7
Part-time non-certified	9.8

Note. N = 102

Percentages do not total to 100% as each district was allowed to check multiple responses; each value represents a percentage of the total sample.

Table 15

School-based Parent Involvement Personnel

Type of School-based Parent Involvement Personnel	Primary/ Elementary	Middle	High
Full-time Certified	14.7%	5.9%	0.0%
Full-time Non-certified	16.7	10.8	2.0
Part-time Certified	14.7	9.8	5.9
Part-time Non-certified	15.7	8.8	2.9

Note. N = 102

Percentages do not total to 100% as each district was allowed to check multiple responses within each personnel category as well as within each school level. Each value represents a percentage of the total sample.

coordinators. District administrators reported only 14.7% of the school districts provided full-time certified parent involvement coordinators based at the primary/elementary levels and 5.9% based at the middle school level. Primary/elementary schools (16.7%) were more likely than middle (10.8%) or high (2.0%) schools to provide full-time non-certified school-based coordinators. Similar results were identified regarding part-time certified school-based coordinators for primary/elementary (14.7%), middle (9.8%), and high (5.9%) school levels. Primary schools (15.7%) more often utilized part-time non-certified school-based coordinators than did middle (8.8%) or high (2.9%) schools.

In addition to reporting the district-wide and school-based parent involvement personnel, Title I district administrators were also asked to report, through an open-ended question, how they utilized the parent involvement personnel. The greatest use of parent involvement personnel reported by Title I district-level administrators (n = 42) was coordinating and teaching parent involvement activities and workshops. Additional job responsibilities included communicating with parents (n = 13) and conducting home visits (n = 8). Least frequent roles of parent involvement personnel, named by only one participant each, ranged from serving as test proctors and conducting student support team meetings to making classroom visits. According to Participant 92, "Parent involvement personnel coordinate district programs and work in the schools to coordinate school programs and policies."

Parent Involvement Staff Development

Research subquestion 5: What staff development do Georgia Title I district-level administrators report being made available for teachers and administrators in parent involvement?

Parent involvement staff development that had been made available to district administrators, school administrators, counselors, teachers, and other staff members was addressed by the researcher in the fifth research subquestion (see Table 16). The greatest number of Title I district administrators reported providing parent involvement training for school administrators (69.6%, n = 71) and teachers (68.6%, n = 70) followed by counselors (59.8%, n = 61), district administrators (54.9%, n = 56), and other staff members (45.5%, n = 46). The means of delivery for parent involvement staff development is displayed in Table 17. A majority of the survey participants reported having utilized state conferences (55.9%, n = 57), district personnel (56.4%, n = 57), and outside consultants (52%, n = 53) to deliver the parent involvement staff development. The least used means of staff development delivery were national conferences (19.6%, n = 20) and college courses (2.9%, n = 3).

When participants were asked in the staff development section of the survey, through an open-ended question, how important they felt parent involvement training was, a majority of Title I district-level administrators (n = 42) felt that parent involvement training was very important. Another 12 survey participants felt parent involvement training was crucial to student success. The purpose of the question was to elicit responses regarding the participants'

Table 16

Personnel Who Had Been Provided Parent Involvement Staff Development

Personnel	Percentage	n
School Administrators	69.6%	71
Teachers	68.6	70
Counselors	59.8	61
District Administrators	54.9	56
Other Staff Members	45.5	46

Note. School Administrators, Teachers, Counselors, District Administrators

N = 102

Other Staff Members N = 101

Table 17

Means of Delivery for Parent Involvement Staff Development

Means of Delivery	Percentage	n
District Personnel	56.4%	57
State Conferences	55.9	57
Outside Consultants	52.0	53
National Conferences	19.6	20
College Courses	2.9	3

Note. District Personnel N = 101

State Conferences, Outside Consultants, National Conferences, College
Courses N = 102

feelings about parent involvement training for school personnel, yet most of the written comments responded only to parent training. Comments ranged from "Very important, but nobody wants to participate . . . little administrator/teacher buy-in" (Participant 59) to "Parent involvement training is necessary to empower parents to take control of their own lives and to help their children at home" (Participant 7). Participant 46 stated, "Parent involvement training was critical with *No Child Left Behind*." Finally, according to Participant 58, "There is a high correlation between student success and a well-trained/informed parent." It is possible that the participants answered as they did because the question said "parent involvement training" rather than "parent involvement staff development" even though it was asked under the staff development section.

Some examples of the most common parent involvement staff development the district administrators have personally received, particularly in the past four years, included state conferences and workshops (n = 23), Title I conferences (n = 16), and Georgia Compensatory Educational Leaders (GCEL) conferences (n = 12). The PASSport training had been received by nine of the participants. According to Participant 49, "The PASS program has been an outstanding program for parents to systematically become involved with the school site. This program changes lives."

In the final open-ended question regarding staff development training, 16 of the Title I district administrators reported they had personally not received any parent involvement training while another 23 left the open-ended question blank; therefore, the results are inconclusive for this question. It is possible that the

participants left the question blank because they had not received any parent involvement staff development.

Summary

In this quantitative study, the researcher investigated the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators. One hundred and four of 169 subjects responded to a survey regarding the strategies utilized for involving parents, techniques or strategies district personnel use for communicating with parents, barriers that hinder parent involvement initiatives, parent involvement personnel, and staff development made available in the area of parent involvement. The responses were analyzed using frequency and percentage of responses.

Data pertaining to strategies utilized indicated that districts most frequently provided on-site workshops. Summer workshops were provided least frequently by the districts. Differences were found with regard to the frequency of parent involvement initiatives across grade levels. Parent activities, as well as the availability of parent centers, were reported more often by primary/elementary schools than by high schools. Title I district administrators reported the majority of parent workshops were taught by teachers in the sponsoring school. An analysis of parent communication methods revealed the most frequent and most successful means was school newsletters/fliers, and the least used method was home visits by teachers.

Although districts utilized a variety of strategies, cited in the findings were common barriers that hinder parent involvement initiatives. The most frequently

named barrier reported by Title I administrators was the lack of time parents have to devote to parent involvement activities.

Based on an analysis of the personnel Georgia Title I district-level administrators utilized to implement parent involvement programs, from the findings, the researcher surmised approximately one-fourth of the districts had full-time certified district-wide parent involvement coordinators. On the school level, the majority of the districts did not employ any full-time certified or non-certified parent involvement coordinators, nor did they employ any part-time certified or part-time non-certified school-based parent involvement coordinators. The most frequently cited service provided by parent involvement personnel was the coordination and teaching of parent involvement activities and workshops.

The researcher, through the results of the study, found that parent involvement staff development in Title I schools was most often delivered to school administrators and teachers by district personnel and through attendance at state conferences. In regard to the importance of parent involvement staff development, the majority of Title I district-level administrators felt that parent involvement training was very important to the success of their Title I programs, yet several of the administrators had received no parent involvement staff development, particularly during the past four years.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This research study was conducted for the purpose of investigating the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators. Research was guided by a review of the literature in the areas of strategies, methods of communication, barriers, personnel, and staff development utilized in parent involvement initiatives.

A survey instrument was developed and mailed to 169 Title I district-level school administrators in Georgia. The survey consisted of Likert, open-ended, and checklist responses. Survey responses were returned from 104 Title I district-level administrators. Only one declined to participate. Thus, the study yielded a 60.9% (N = 103) participation rate.

Surveys were received from systems with enrollments ranging from 0-999 students (12%, n = 12) to those systems serving 50,000 or more students (2%, n = 2). The majority of the systems (54.0%, n = 54) served 1,000 - 4,999 students. The number of years participants had served as a Title I district administrator varied from as little as 0 to 5 years experience (65.3%, n = 64) to as much as 21+ years (4.1%, n = 4). The overwhelming majority of programs operated as Title I schoolwide programs (n = 61) rather than targeted assistance programs (n = 34). During the past four years, of the Title I district-level administrators who reported having received parent involvement staff

development, many had received the training through state workshops/conferences, Title I workshops/conferences, and GCEL conferences.

Research Questions

The researcher sought to describe the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools. The overarching research question addressed in this study was: What are the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators? Analysis of the data was also guided by the following research subquestions:

1. What strategies are utilized for involving parents in their children's education as reported by Georgia Title I district-level school administrators?
2. What do Georgia Title I district-level school administrators report as techniques or strategies their district personnel use for communicating with parents?
3. What barriers hinder parent involvement initiatives, as reported by Georgia Title I district-level school administrators?
4. What personnel do Georgia Title I district-level school administrators utilize to implement parent involvement programs?
5. What staff development do Georgia Title I district-level school administrators report being made available for teachers and administrators in parent involvement?

Discussion of Research Findings

Parent Involvement Strategies

The current researcher conducted a study in Georgia and found a variety of research-based strategies were utilized in Title I schools to actively engage parents. In the current study the researcher indicated that on-site parent workshops were provided always or frequently by 85.3% of the respondents' districts. This finding is reflective of previous research by both Baker (1995) and Freeman (2001). In a review of promising parent involvement programs, parent workshops were identified by Baker as a means of improving parent involvement. Similarly, Freeman reported 69.5% of the Alabama Title I schools offered parent workshops. In this study, district administrators overwhelmingly held workshops in the evening to engage parents, and always or frequently provided meals along with an activity or PTA to increase attendance. Slightly more than half of the respondents further accommodated parents by offering workshops during the school day and in community buildings; yet, a few wrote, in open-ended responses, that daytime workshops had been an unsuccessful strategy for them. The finding regarding the frequent use of on-site workshops was not surprising. It has been this researcher's experience that parents generally are only interested in attending activities actually held in their child's school building. Even in this researcher's small, rural school district, very few parents will attend a parent workshop held jointly with another school that is held in the other school's building. Parents apparently do not feel any ownership unless it is held on-site at their child's school.

Through their responses to an open-ended question, district administrators made recommendations regarding successful parent workshop topics, including testing topics, particularly the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCTs), reading activities, and the PASSport program. It was not unexpected that one-fifth of the respondents recommended testing topics, particularly the CRCTs, since so much emphasis is placed on accountability through *NCLB* requirements. Nor was it unexpected when reading activities were identified as a common workshop topic, because this is traditionally one of the first workshop topics offered by most schools. Each school situation is different because each serves a different community; therefore, school personnel must either survey the parents to determine what time frame and location best meet their needs or they must learn through trial and error. Williams and Chavkin (1990) identified parent involvement evaluations as one of the essential elements for effective parent involvement programs, yet over 40% of the respondents reported they only used evaluations sometimes or never. This was an interesting finding, because the goal of parent involvement is to engage parents, yet it may be possible that a large number of schools are not seeking the input of the parents they are responsible for serving.

The use of rewards and incentives was another strategy used to engage parents. In the current study, the researcher reported 73.6% of Georgia Title I district-level administrators responded as always or frequently utilizing door prizes/incentives to engage parents, even though previous research (Richardson, 1996) had shown the level of parent involvement was only slightly impacted by

the use of rewards and incentives. In conversations with other Title I administrators and from personal experience, this researcher has learned that parents will attend if they may receive a door prize or an educational item for their child. This is not surprising since so many Title I children come from low-income families who do not have the financial means to provide educational materials in the home.

In addition to the recognition of parent efforts, another available strategy recommended by Christenson and Hurley (1997) and Davies (2002) is the use of rewards or recognition for teachers for their efforts in parent involvement. However, data from the present study indicated Georgia parent involvement practices regarding teacher compensation and release time for teachers to engage parents were not implemented as recommended by Christenson and Hurley and Davies. This researcher found that only 31.3% of Georgia Title I schools always or frequently provide teacher compensation for workshops, and only 20.8% always or frequently provide release time to teachers for parent involvement.

Christenson and Hurley (1997) noted that teacher schedules or contracts may have to be altered to create time for teachers to develop parent partnerships. Similarly, according to Davies (2002), if teachers and administrators are expected to develop partnerships between the home and the school, incentives such as public recognition, pay increases, or promotions, when possible, must be provided. Unlike the results of the present study, it was discovered by Freeman (2001) that 57.7% of the Alabama public school

principals always or usually recognized teachers and parents for their parent involvement efforts.

The usage of parent resource centers was an additional strategy to engage parents in their children's education. Based on the current research, this researcher reported that slightly more than 83% of the Georgia Title I district-level administrators reported they had operational parent resource centers. This study's results far exceed those reported by Wong and Meyer (2001) in which 58% of Title I schoolwide schools, in a 1994 survey, had operational parent centers. Yet, Christenson and Hurley (1997) identified parent centers as one of the least desired activities by parents. The finding in the current study that over 91% of the parent centers provided parent checkout of materials for use in the home is supported by the research of Anderson and Seppanen (1995), as well as Osborne and deOnis (1997), who also reported the availability of parent checkout of materials from parent centers. The number of district administrators reporting the usage of parent resource centers exceeded the expectations of this researcher, whereas the finding that less than 15% of the high schools operated parent resource centers was expected. In regard to the frequency of parent activities sponsored by grade level and the provision of parent centers, it was not unexpected that Georgia middle schools and high schools did not sponsor parent activities or provide parent centers as frequently as did primary/elementary schools. The low numbers in the middle and high schools may possibly be attributed to the fact that many middle and high schools do not operate Title I

programs nor do they have Parent Teacher Associations and would probably not have the necessary funding for parent activities or a parent resource center.

The results of the current study indicated Title I districts and schools employ a variety of research-based strategies to engage Title I parents in their children's education. Title I administrators reported, through an open-ended question, that the most successful strategies for increasing parent participation included workshops combined with a meal, an activity or PTA, and childcare because each of these strategies is an attempt to eliminate barriers to non-participation. It was surprising that only slightly over half of the parent workshops were taught by teachers in the sponsoring school, because it has been this researcher's experience that teacher-led workshops are generally more successful. This may be attributed to the fact that parents are eager to learn from their children's teachers, and teachers are more positive toward the workshops, in general, because they are active participants in planning and conducting the workshops. It was not surprising that so few districts utilize outside consultants to present parent workshops, because of the expense as well as a possible lack of knowledge about how to locate and contact outside consultants.

Interestingly, though, in the area of parent involvement strategies, only 7 out of the 16 strategies listed on the survey instrument were mentioned by respondents as used in any degree of frequency (always or frequently). Since 65% of the Title I administrators had five or fewer years experience administering a Title I program, it is possible many of the respondents were not knowledgeable about the available research-based strategies for involving parents. The

strategies most often reported as never being utilized were summer workshops and Saturday workshops. This is not surprising because, in this study, it was noted that a large number of districts do not provide teacher compensation or release time for parent workshops.

Parent Communication Methods

According to Epstein (1995), parent communication is necessary for schools to engage parents. In this study, it was found that school newsletters/fliers were the most frequently used means of communication with parents. These findings reinforced the findings of Chavkin (2000), McCall (1998), and Redding (2000) that indicated school newsletters were an inexpensive and informative means of communication with parents. The finding in this study that parent-teacher conferences and open houses were also frequently used parent communication methods reinforced the findings of previous researchers. Parent-teacher conferences were reported as a means of maintaining contact with parents by Barge and Loges (2003), McCall, and Redding, whereas Osborne and deOnis (1997) reported parent contact was made through school meetings. Notes/progress reports sent home with children was another parent communication method used always or frequently and identified by Title I administrators as a successful method of communication. This method was probably ranked high because it fits within the regular school procedures and does not require additional work outside the school day.

Home visits by teachers were another means of communicating with parents, although utilized infrequently and ranked lowest among communication

methods by Georgia Title I administrators. This finding supports the work of Baker (1997), who reported home visits were seldom utilized because of safety issues for teachers. An additional finding in this study was that other low-ranking communication methods used by approximately one-third of the respondents were computerized telephone calls and district letters being mailed.

This researcher found that Georgia Title I districts and schools are using a variety of means of communicating with parents. It was noted that in the area of parent communication methods, 10 of the 17 communication methods identified in Table 12 were used by more than 50% of the respondents' districts. Another finding of interest was that three of the four most commonly used communication methods - school newsletters/fliers, parent teacher conferences, and open houses - were also reported by the district administrators, in an open-ended question, to be the most successfully used. This was of particular interest to this researcher because not only were the three methods more traditional communication methods, but they were also used by over 90% of the districts. It was surprising that 15 of the Title I district administrators reported having had success in communicating with parents through web pages. Even though a majority of the Title I district administrators reported operating Title I schoolwide projects that serve all children, many of the Title I students come from low-income families who may not have the financial resources to have a home computer with an Internet connection.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

In the present survey results, parent time and parent attitudes as well as lack of transportation were the most frequently reported barriers. These findings support the research of Baker (1997), Freeman (2001), Lee (1994), Leitch and Tangri (1988), McCall (1998), Rutherford and Bernick (1995), Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001), USDOE (1997b), USDOE (1999), USDOE (2001), and Winnail et. al. (2000) who pointed out that time constraints serve as a barrier to parent involvement initiatives. The results of this study also supported the research of Epstein and Connors (1995), Ramirez (2001), and Freeman that identified parent attitudes as a barrier. These findings lead this researcher to believe that school personnel were not willing to assume some of the responsibility for parent involvement initiatives not being successful. It was apparent that the respondents tended to blame the parents, yet, they were not fully utilizing the strategies to help eliminate the barriers to participation. In similar findings, Baker, Bernick and Rutherford (1995), Pena (2000), Ramirez, and USDOE (1997b) identified transportation as a barrier to families being involved in their children's schools. Yet, unlike many studies, Freeman and Richardson (1996) did not report transportation to be a serious barrier to parent involvement. Contradicting Freeman and Richardson, the current researcher discovered that a lack of transportation hampered parent initiatives in a majority of Georgia districts (59.8%).

Surprisingly, only three of the barriers listed on the survey instrument were reported as being barriers in the districts by more than 50% of the district Title I

administrators. In addition to parent time and parent attitudes, transportation was the second most frequently named barrier; yet, almost half of the respondents reported they had never provided transportation to lessen the barrier.

District administrators reported staff development, administrative support, lack of parent resource centers, and lack of translators as minimal barriers. With the changing population in Georgia schools today, it was interesting that the lack of translators was not named as a major hindrance to parent involvement initiatives. It may be possible that Title I district administrators have found the personnel or materials needed to be able to communicate with families not speaking English. If this study had been conducted as recently as three years ago, before systems were forced into providing the services through *NCLB*, this researcher feels that the provision of translators would have been more of a need by the districts, particularly before the state provided access to a web-based program where communications required by *NCLB* had already been translated.

Even with Georgia's current economic conditions, the overwhelming majority of survey participants did not report funding to be a barrier. Therefore, the lack of funding cannot be an excuse for districts and schools providing limited parent involvement services to their families. Prior researchers identified many barriers that hinder parent involvement initiatives. School staffs should be interested in utilizing some of the strategies in this study to help eliminate barriers that currently hinder parent involvement initiatives in Georgia.

Parent Involvement Personnel

School-based personnel. In prior studies, researchers indicated districts hired certified and non-certified personnel solely for parent involvement purposes who were both school-based and district-wide. In a 2001 study, Freeman revealed that almost half of the nearly 800 Alabama public school principals reported utilizing the services of either a full-time or a part-time parent involvement employee. In another study, Wong and Meyer (2001) indicated over 80% of surveyed principals in schoolwide Title I schools employed family coordinators, whereas only 66% of the principals in Title I targeted assistance schools reported having a parent coordinator. The researcher's findings contradicted those of Freeman (2001) and Wong and Meyer (2001). This researcher found that less than 17% of the primary/elementary schools, 11% of the middle schools, and 6% of the high schools employed full-time or part-time certified or non-certified parent involvement personnel who were school-based. While 28.4% of the respondents reported limited personnel as a barrier that hindered parent involvement initiatives, 30.4% indicated they employed part-time certified parent involvement personnel for their primary/elementary, middle, and/or high schools.

District-wide personnel. A system-wide community coordinator rather than a school-based coordinator was recommended by Moles (1999). Furthermore, a minimum of one full-time person to coordinate state parent involvement, another to coordinate district activities, and, finally, a parent involvement coordinator in each school or small group of schools was recommended by Epstein (1991). In

contrast to Epstein's recommendation, the current researcher found a majority of the school districts did not employ any certified or non-certified district-wide parent involvement coordinators. Similarly, this researcher identified that over three-fourths of the districts did not utilize the services of full-time or part-time non-certified personnel for district-wide parent involvement.

Utilization of personnel. In this study, the researcher found that almost half of the Title I district-level administrators utilized parent involvement personnel to coordinate and teach parent involvement activities and workshops. This finding supports the findings of Aronson (1996), Bernick and Rutherford (1995), Curry, Washington, and Zyskowski (2000), Johnson (1994), and Lope and Schultz (1996) that parent coordinators had been utilized to conduct educational parent workshops. In this study, the researcher also found that parent coordinators had been used to communicate with parents, concurring with the research of Chavkin (2000) who also reported that one role of parent coordinators is to communicate with parents. Another responsibility of parent coordinators identified in this study was conducting home visits, concurring with the research findings of Anderson and Seppanen (1995), Bernick and Rutherford, Curry, Washington, and Zyskowski, Hiatt-Michael (2001), Lope and Schultz, and USDOE (2001). Only one participant each had used parent coordinators to serve as test proctors, conduct student support team meetings, and make classroom visits.

It was noted that, at the district-level, districts were more likely to employ full-time certified personnel (26.5%); whereas at the school level, respondents' districts were more likely to employ part-time certified (30.4%) or full-time non-

certified personnel (29.5%). Survey responses indicated almost three-fourths of the districts did not provide full-time or part-time district-wide parent involvement personnel, and only a limited number had school-based personnel solely for parent involvement activities, regardless of the grade level of the school. Based upon conversations with other district administrators and from articles read regarding parent activities sponsored in various Georgia schools today, this researcher would have expected more districts and schools to have personnel devoted solely to parent involvement. It is possible that districts and schools have found a means of providing parent activities in the absence of parent involvement personnel or, as is the situation for this researcher, parent involvement is a part of the Title I administrator's job description. Given the choice, small districts may budget Title I funds into additional teachers or lead teachers to help attain *NCLB* accountability standards rather than employing personnel solely for parent involvement.

Parent Involvement Staff Development

Staff development is necessary if parent involvement initiatives are to occur in schools today. However, a common thread of the studies reviewed (Redding, 2000; Rutherford & Bernick, 1995) was the lack of staff training in how to work effectively with families. More specifically, in a 1997 United States Department of Education study (USDOE, 1997b), researchers reported that 48% of Title I principals identified a lack of parent involvement training for staff members. Contrary to this finding, the current findings revealed over 68% of the Title I district-level administrators reported they had provided parent involvement

training for their school administrators and teachers. This research supports the findings of Baker (1995), who reported over 50% of more than 400 responding superintendents offered their staffs training in how to work with parents. Additional staff members who were provided parent involvement staff development, in descending order, were counselors, district administrators, and others staff members. When asked to check what barriers to parent involvement were encountered in their schools and districts, few participants identified staff development as being a barrier. The data from the current study pertaining to outside parent involvement consultants delivering the staff development for staff members (52%) contradicts Baker who reported it was rare that parent involvement specialists led in-service workshops.

Staff development relative to parent involvement is crucial to actively engaging parents. The two groups districts most often trained were school administrators and teachers, and the training was least likely to be delivered through attendance at national conferences and college classes. This finding regarding national conferences and college classes as the least used means of parent involvement staff development delivery was not unanticipated because of the expense each would involve for the school district or Title I program. It was interesting to this researcher that almost 70% of the school administrators and teachers had received parent involvement staff development by their districts, but only slightly over 50% of the district administrators had been trained in how to work with parents. This finding partially supports the research of Epstein (2002) who found few teachers, administrators or district leaders had been adequately

prepared to implement effective school-family partnerships. Most of the district administrators who had received staff development specific to parent involvement wrote, in an open-ended response, that their training had been received through state conferences/workshops, Title I conferences, and the GCEL conferences. Fifty-four of the survey participants who responded to the open-ended question examining the importance of parent involvement training felt parent involvement training was very important and crucial to student success in their districts. Yet, when asked to respond in an open-ended question concerning the parent involvement staff development they had personally received, particularly over the past four years, 16 of the Title I district administrators responded they had no training, while another 23 respondents left the question blank. It is the opinion of this researcher that those who left the question blank had received no parent involvement training. This researcher is of the opinion that some administrators are not putting their beliefs into practice in regard to their own professional growth in parent involvement. It is important to note that parent involvement is under the umbrella of responsibilities of a district Title I administrator, and parent involvement must begin at the district level; yet, this may not be possible since so many administrators have had no parent involvement staff development.

Conclusions

In this study, the researcher investigated the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators. The strategies, methods of communication, barriers, personnel,

and staff development relating to parent involvement were analyzed. Based on the responses from Georgia Title I district-level school administrators who participated in this study, several conclusions can be drawn.

1. A majority of Title I district-level administrators were inexperienced, because they had served only five or fewer years as a Title I administrator, and many had not received any specific parent involvement staff development in the past four years. In addition, many school administrators and teachers had not received any staff development specific to parent involvement. It is possible that a lack of staff development specific to parent involvement would limit parent involvement initiatives since the district administrators, school administrators, and teachers would not be aware of the research-based strategies for engaging parents.
2. Title I district administrators were not fully utilizing the research-based strategies for involving parents and for eliminating the barriers identified, such as transportation. Almost half of the districts had not offered transportation to increase participation by parents.
3. The districts and schools were using a variety of research-based methods of communicating with parents. Several methods that were more frequently utilized were also identified as the most successful communication methods.
4. Funding for parent involvement was not a barrier for most districts, yet it was determined that most districts were not providing compensation or release time to enable teachers to engage parents. Therefore, few Saturday and summer parent workshops were provided by schools.

5. Schools did not have enough personnel devoted solely to parent involvement. A limited number of personnel dedicated to engaging parents were employed at the district and school levels.

Implications

Based on a review of the available literature and the research findings of this study, the following implications can be drawn:

1. The results of this study should serve as an indication to school and district personnel and Title I district administrators who have the resources to provide parent involvement staff development to school and teachers. Many Title I district-level administrators were inexperienced, and along with some school administrators and teachers, had not received any staff development specific to parent involvement. In addition, Title I administrators were not fully utilizing the research-based strategies for engaging parents. Title I administrators, school administrators, and teachers need to learn strategies to engage parents, communication methods, and ways to eliminate barriers to participation through staff development opportunities. The training should be tailored to the needs of the parents and communities the districts and schools served, be on-going, and linked to the curriculum so teachers and administrators will be more likely to embrace the concept of more actively involving parents.
2. The results of this study regarding the lack of experience of Georgia Title I district-level administrators and their need for staff development specific to parent involvement should also be of interest to Georgia Department of

Education personnel, particularly those in the Title I division, who are in a position to provide staff development opportunities on research-based parent involvement strategies for inexperienced Title I administrators.

3. Furthermore, the results of this study regarding the need for staff development specific to parent involvement should serve as an indication to college and university personnel who prepare teachers that Title I district administrators, school administrators, and teachers need more research-based parent involvement staff development in pre-service and graduate courses.
4. The results of this study should serve as an implication to Title I administrators, as well as district and school administrators, that if transportation were provided, parent participation in parent involvement initiatives might increase. In this study, it was indicated that transportation was a barrier even though most districts had not provided transportation in an attempt to increase parent participation. Title I district administrators and district and school administrators are in a position to collaborate with district transportation officials to provide transportation as a means of increasing parent participation. Since this study found that a large number of districts identified transportation as a barrier when they had not even provided the service, it leads this researcher to assume that either the parents did not need the transportation or the district or school administrators were not willing to commit their time or the resources to ensure that the service was provided.

5. The responses gathered in this study should serve as an implication to Title I administrators, district administrators, state and local school board members, and Georgia Department of Education personnel, particularly those in the Title I division, who are in a position to provide the funding, that teachers should be provided release time and compensation to actively engage parents. The researcher, through the findings of this study, indicated that, although funding was not a concern in most districts, teachers were not being provided compensation or release time to engage parents.
4. The results of this study should serve as an indication to Title I administrators, district administrators, state and local school board members, and Georgia Department of Education personnel, particularly those in the Title I division, who are in a position to provide the funding, that school personnel could more actively engage parents if adequate parent involvement personnel were provided. The researcher found that districts nor schools had been provided adequate personnel dedicated solely to parent involvement.

Dissemination

The researcher will share the findings of this study with Title I state and district administrators, school administrators, and teachers in a presentation at the annual state Title I and the Georgia Compensatory Educational Leaders Conferences as well as regional Title I meetings. This study is important to each of the above-named people because it will assist them in making educated

decisions as they strive to increase parent involvement as a means of meeting the accountability standards that have been mandated under *NCLB*. The findings will also be shared with district curriculum directors at the district meeting of the Georgia Association of Curriculum and Instructional Supervisors (GACIS). The information from this study should assist curriculum directors as they plan staff development for their administrators, teachers, and staff members. The findings will also be shared with survey participants who requested a summary of the results. Upon request, the findings will be shared with educational leaders on state and local school boards, state educator certification agencies, college and university professors, and state and federal legislators. This study should be important to each of these groups because it will help them to understand the issues districts face when implementing parent involvement mandates.

Furthermore, the information in this study will help these individuals make informed decisions when they are drafting federal or state legislation, state and local board policies, certification requirements, and developing coursework for pre-service and graduate educators. In addition, the current parent involvement practices utilized in Georgia Title I schools will be presented to local parent involvement committees in a group setting.

Recommendations

General Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following general recommendations are presented:

1. Districts should provide staff development specific to parent involvement for all Title I administrators, school administrators, and teachers.
2. State certification agencies should investigate the need for requiring parent involvement training for all educators.
3. The Georgia Department of Education needs to provide regional parent involvement assistance to Title I administrators and sponsor a parent involvement conference on research-based parent involvement strategies for Title I administrators, parent involvement personnel, school administrators and teachers either annually or bi-annually.
4. College and university personnel should incorporate research-based parent involvement strategies, methods of communication, and barriers into courses for pre-service and graduate students.
5. Title I administrators, district administrators, state and local school board members, and Georgia Department of Education Title I personnel should provide funding for parent involvement personnel as well as release time and compensation for teachers to engage parents.
6. At the school and/or district levels, a transportation committee should be formed to survey parents to determine the transportation needs and then work to find the means for providing the service.

Recommendations for the Current Instrument

Based on issues that arose in analyzing the data in this study, the following recommendations for the current instrument are presented:

1. In Section I C. where participants were asked how frequently parent activities were sponsored at the school level, a choice of "None offered" should be added.
2. In Section I E. where the participants were requested to list the parent involvement topics or purchased programs that their districts or schools had successfully utilized in parent workshops that they would recommend to others, a line should be added to find out why they were making the recommendation(s).
3. In Section F. where participants were requested to check the location of any parent resource centers the districts provide, the mobile parent involvement bus should be deleted since few systems, if any, had any operational buses.
4. In Section II B. a line needs to be added where the district administrators could state why the communication method they named was successful and another line needs to be added where participants name the least successful methods of communication and state why.
5. In Section III B. where participants named the greatest parent involvement barriers in their districts, a line should be added where the participants could state why the items named were the greatest barriers.
6. In Section IV A. where participants checked the personnel the districts employ for parent involvement, a line where participants can mark "None" needs to be added. The directions for Section IV A. also need to be expanded to read as follows: "Please check the personnel your district

employs for parent involvement. Do not include yourself as Title I district administrator since parent involvement is a part of your job responsibilities.”

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for further research are presented:

1. A longitudinal study should be conducted to compare parent involvement practices in Georgia’s Title I schools with non-Title I schools.
2. This study should be replicated in another state or states to investigate current parent involvement practices in their Title I schools. The findings should be compared to the findings of this study that was limited only to Georgia schools.
3. This study should be expanded to include an additional variable such as the duration or intensity of the strategies. This variable may provide a more comprehensive description of current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools.
4. This study should be expanded to include qualitative measures such as interviews of a random sample of Title I district-level administrators to gain a more in-depth description of current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools.
5. An expanded study could be conducted to determine the impact of parent involvement on student achievement.

6. This study should be expanded to include an examination of the type and intensity/duration of assistance Title I schools/school districts receive from the Georgia Department of Education.

Concluding Thoughts

As a district administrator who has been coordinating a Title I program in a small, rural South Georgia school system since 1994, the researcher recognizes the importance of the services provided by the Title I program, particularly those focused on involving parents in their children's education. The level of accountability in schools has increased dramatically since 1994, particularly with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The need for parents and teachers to work together as a team is critical if the children in our schools today are to succeed. This is so very important at all levels, but particularly at the primary/elementary levels where the children cannot be expected to assume all responsibilities for their own education.

In the same way that parents need education about how to effectively work with their children and their schools, it is even more crucial that the first step be to educate school and district administrators and teachers in how to work with and actively engage all parents in their children's education, regardless of their social or economic standing in the community. Schools need to do more to encourage parents to become active participants. In this research all 103 districts have utilized some of the parent involvement strategies, yet the researcher feels many school systems have so much more they could do to engage parents. School districts need to strive to eliminate any barriers that

exist by providing the necessary resources and parent involvement personnel, people who truly have parent involvement in their hearts and feel parents can make a difference. The researcher also feels that, oftentimes, the actions of the school or district personnel do not match their words and, in reality, the districts have not totally opened the doors of the schools to embrace the parents as part of the child's educational team.

Involving parents is a major challenge and requires many hours outside the school day, but it is a challenge that any school can and should be willing to accept. Together, parents and teachers can make a difference in the lives of our Title I children.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
SURVEY REVIEW PANEL

SURVEY REVIEW PANEL

Dr. Judy Alger, Title I Education Program Specialist, Georgia Department of Education

Dr. James Everson, Jr., Title I Education Program Specialist, Georgia Department of Education

Mrs. Evelyn Maddox, Title I Education Program Specialist, Georgia Department of Education

Mr. Jack McLeod, Title I Education Program Specialist, Georgia Department of Education

Dr. Nancy Norton, Title I Education Program Specialist, Georgia Department of Education

APPENDIX B
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY FOR GEORGIA DISTRICT-LEVEL TITLE I ADMINISTRATORS

The purpose of this survey is to determine the current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as reported by Title I district-level school administrators. *Please respond to survey based on parent involvement practices for your district's Title I schools only.* Feel free to respond on the back of the survey, if necessary. Your responses will help Georgia administrators as they seek to improve parent involvement initiatives.

Thank you for participating in this study.

I. PARENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

A. Please circle how frequently you provide the following:

	A=Always	F=Frequently	S=Sometimes	N=Never
1. Transportation to parent workshops	A	F	S	N
2. Childcare for parent workshops	A	F	S	N
3. Door prizes and other incentives for parent workshops	A	F	S	N
4. Meals for parent workshops	A	F	S	N
5. Translators, when necessary, for parent workshops	A	F	S	N
6. Workshop evaluations at the end of parent workshops	A	F	S	N
7. Workshop fliers/newsletters in the parent's native language	A	F	S	N
8. Parent workshops on-site at the sponsoring school	A	F	S	N
9. Parent workshops in a community building	A	F	S	N
10. Parent workshops during the summer months	A	F	S	N
11. Compensation for teachers who conduct parent involvement workshops outside the regular school day	A	F	S	N
12. Release time for teachers to plan parent workshops/activities.	A	F	S	N
13. Parent workshops during the school day	A	F	S	N
14. Parent workshops in the evening	A	F	S	N
15. Parent workshops on Saturday	A	F	S	N
16. Parent workshops in conjunction with PTA meetings.	A	F	S	N

B. Which of the above strategies have been the most successful in your district? _____
Why? _____

Which have been the least successful? _____ Why? _____

C. Please check how frequently you sponsor parent activities at the following levels:

Primary/Elementary ___ 1/month ___ 2/month ___ 1/grading period ___ 1/semester Other: _____
Middle ___ 1/month ___ 2/month ___ 1/grading period ___ 1/semester Other: _____
High ___ 1/month ___ 2/month ___ 1/grading period ___ 1/semester Other: _____

D. The majority of my district's parent workshops are taught by:

___ District-level parent involvement coordinator ___ Teachers in the sponsoring school
___ School-level parent involvement coordinator ___ Outside parent involvement consultants

E. Please list the parent involvement topics or purchased programs that your district or schools have successfully utilized in parent workshops that you would recommend to others. _____

F. Please check the location of any parent resource centers your district provides:

___ Primary/Elementary Schools ___ High Schools ___ District-wide Center
___ Middle Schools ___ Mobile Parent Involvement Bus ___ None in the district

G. Availability of materials provided for parent use by my district's parent resource center(s) include:

___ On-site use of materials only ___ Parent checkout of materials for use in the home

II. A. COMMUNICATION: Please check all of the parent communication methods your district or schools utilize.

- District newsletters/fliers District web page Notes/Progress reports sent home by children
- School newsletters/fliers School web page Notes/Progress reports mailed home
- Newspaper articles E-mail Home visits by parent involvement coordinators
- Parent teacher conferences Open houses Home visits by teachers
- District letter mailed Phone calls Computerized phone calls
- School letter mailed Radio announcements Other: _____

B. Which communication methods have your district and schools used successfully in communicating with parents?

III. A. BARRIERS: Please check barriers your district/schools experience that hinder parent involvement initiatives.

- Transportation Language differences Childcare Administrative support
- Communication Lack of translators Parent attitudes Staff development
- Teacher attitudes Limited personnel Parent time Lack of parent resource centers
- Teacher time Funds Other: _____

B. What are the greatest parent involvement barriers in your district? _____

IV. PERSONNEL

A. District Level: Please check the personnel your district employs for parent involvement.

- 1. Full-time certified district-wide parent involvement coordinator _____
- 2. Full-time non-certified district-wide parent involvement coordinator _____
- 3. Part-time certified district-wide parent involvement coordinator _____
- 4. Part-time non-certified district-wide parent involvement coordinator _____

B. School Level: Please check the school levels at which you have the following parent involvement coordinators or NONE if your district does not provide any school-based parent involvement coordinators.

	Primary/Elem.	Middle	High	None
5. Full-time certified school-based coordinator	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Full-time non-certified school-based coordinator	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Part-time certified school-based coordinator	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Part-time non-certified school-based coordinator	_____	_____	_____	_____

C. Please list ways your district utilizes your parent involvement personnel. _____

V. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Please check staff members who have been provided parent involvement staff development.

- District administrators School administrators Counselors Teachers Other staff

Please check the means of delivery for the parent involvement staff development offered.

- National conferences State conferences College courses Outside consultants District personnel

How important do you feel parent involvement training is? _____

VI. DEMOGRAPHICS: Please check the blank next to the appropriate response.

- 1. I have been a district Title I Coordinator: 0-5 years 6-10 years 11-20 years 21+ years
- 2. Number of students in district: 0-999 1,000-4,999 5,000-9,999 10,000-49,999 50,000+
- 3. Number of Title I schools operating: _____ Schoolwide programs _____ Targeted assistance programs
- 4. Describe parent involvement staff development you personally have received, particularly in the past four years.

APPENDIX C

INITIAL LETTER TO TITLE I DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS

May 6, 2005

Dear Colleague:

My name is Martha McBride, and I am the Title I Coordinator for the Jeff Davis County Schools. As a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia, I am conducting a study entitled Current Parent Involvement Practices in Georgia Title I Schools as Reported by Title I District-Level School Administrators. This study is designed to determine current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools. This knowledge will enable parents, teachers, school administrators, college professors, and legislators to gain additional insight into the current parent involvement practices in Georgia's Title I schools.

As a district school administrator, I realize how extremely busy you are in the spring, but your input is vital to the success of this study. However, there will be no penalty should you decide not to participate or to later withdraw from the study. If you volunteer to participate, please complete the enclosed survey instrument and return it to me by May 20, 2005, in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Completion and return of the survey will indicate permission to use the information you provide in the study. You should be able to complete it in no more than twenty minutes and it presents no risk to you as a participant. I will not be able to identify your responses and only aggregate information will be reported. The study will be most useful if you respond to every item in the survey; however, you may choose not to answer one or more of the items without penalty. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. If you desire a summary of the results, please e-mail your request to me at mmcbride@jeff-davis.k12.ga.us.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please call me at 912-375-6705 (w) or 912-363-4759 (h) or my chairperson, Dr. Catherine Wooddy, at 478-275-6750. If you should have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please direct them to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at Georgia Southern University at 912-486-7758 or oversight@georgiasouthern.edu.

Please allow me to thank you in advance for your assistance in this study regarding parent involvement. The results should allow us to improve current initiatives to involve parents in their children's education.

Sincerely,

Martha Massey McBride
Title I Coordinator
Jeff Davis County Schools

Enclosure: Survey
Envelope

APPENDIX D
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-681-5465

Administrative Annex
P.O. Box 8005
Statesboro, GA 30460

Fax: 912-681-0719

Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

To: Martha McBride
Route 1 Box 135
Lumber City, GA 31549

cc: Catherine Woody, Faculty Advisor
P. O. Box 8100

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: April 4, 2005

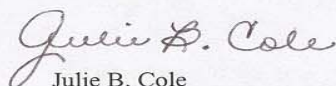
Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H05145**, and titled "**Current Parent Involvement Practices in Georgia Title I Schools as Reported by Title I District-Level School Administrators**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

APPENDIX E
FOLLOW-UP POSTCARD

Dear

On May 6, I mailed you a survey instrument (on light blue paper) regarding current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools as part of my doctoral study at Georgia Southern University. I would like to express my thanks if you have already returned this survey because I realize how very busy this time of year is for you. If you have not, I would consider it a professional courtesy if you could take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it in the stamped, self-addressed light blue envelope provided with the survey. If you have not received the survey or have misplaced it, please contact me at 912-375-6705 or by e-mail at mmcbride@jeff-davis.k12.ga.us and I will send you another survey to complete. I appreciate your time and assistance in this matter. Thanks!

Sincerely,

Martha M. McBride, Title I Coordinator
Jeff Davis County Schools

APPENDIX F

SECOND LETTER TO TITLE I DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS

June 18, 2005

Dear Colleague:

My name is Martha McBride, and I am the Title I Coordinator for the Jeff Davis County Schools. As a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia, I am conducting a study entitled Current Parent Involvement Practices in Georgia Title I Schools as Reported by Title I District-Level School Administrators. This study is designed to determine current parent involvement practices in Georgia Title I schools. This knowledge will enable parents, teachers, school administrators, college professors, and legislators to gain additional insight into the current parent involvement practices in Georgia's Title I schools.

As a district school administrator, I realize how extremely busy you are in the summer, but your input is vital to the success of this study. However, there will be no penalty should you decide not to participate or to later withdraw from the study. If you volunteer to participate, please complete the enclosed survey instrument and return it to me by Thursday, June 30, 2005, or sooner, in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Completion and return of the survey will indicate permission to use the information you provide in the study. You should be able to complete it in no more than twenty minutes and it presents no risk to you as a participant. I will not be able to identify your responses and only aggregate information will be reported. The study will be most useful if you respond to every item in the survey; however, you may choose not to answer one or more of the items without penalty. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. If you desire a summary of the results, please e-mail your request to me at mmcbride@jeff-davis.k12.ga.us.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please call me at 912-375-6705 (w) or 912-363-4759 (h) or my chairperson, Dr. Catherine Woody, at 478-275-6750. If you should have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please direct them to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at Georgia Southern University at 912-486-7758 or oversight@georgiasouthern.edu.

Please allow me to thank you in advance for your assistance in this study regarding parent involvement, particularly, if you have already completed and mailed in the survey. The results should allow us to improve current initiatives to involve parents in their children's education.

Sincerely,

Martha Massey McBride
Title I Coordinator
Jeff Davis County Schools

Enclosure: Survey
Envelope